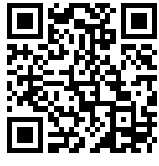
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THE MANTILLA

RICHARD AUMERLE

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THE MANTILLA

BY

RICHARD AUMERLE, " pseud. of
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THE MANTILLA

I

THEY were all gathered after supper in Weldon's room, Dailey with a ghoulish patch over one eye, Nolan gently nursing a broken finger or two: Somebody had tramped on them, Weir falling asleep on a trunk, and the rest scattered about at odds and ends. The other team had gone home crippled and broken-hearted in leaving here the championship that they had held for a dozen years. The crowd was out on the campus, building bonfires and gathering to start on a serenade of the town.

"Well, what are we going to get? It'll have to be the biggest thing yet, for this game. We'll never have another together. Do you think of that? You, sleeping there in the corner. Get up, Weir, and 'dress the house."

"Three—Y—fourteen!" was Weir's answer out of his dream, where he was playing the game over.

"Come out of it, son; you've played enough.

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All you're ever going to play, anyhow;" and Nolan as he spoke reached over one great paw, the sound one, and lifted the little quarterback, still sleeping, to the middle of the room.

"Let a fellow alone," he grumbled, as he tried to open his eyes against the light. "Wha' d' you want?"

"An idea!" The chorus was ready. An idea was a thing often wanted in their matters.

"Wha' for?" Weir had entirely forgotten why they had gathered.

"Oh, for the history class, of course. Something in cuneiforms, I suppose." Dailey was impatient to get to something.

"Well it has something of history in it: And pretty lively history, some of it, over these last four years. 'Member the night we stole the Doctor's cap and gown, after the Georgetown game?" Nolan was inclined to reminiscence.

"Yes; and they were goin' to 'fire' me for knowing about it." Weir was able to chime in at the right place now.

"They wouldn't let a fellow go for one of these things," said Dailey, "they know it's for the collection. They wouldn't say a word about it only it worries them that they can never get a bat of their eyes on the stuff that we've picked up."

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"Well, what's it goin' to be this time?" Dailey was all for sticking to the purpose. "You've got something in your head, Weldon, and you're the man to choose."

Weldon accepted the tribute with a grunt, and laid claim to his prerogative: "The ball off the tower; that's what we want this time."

"Take the tower itself, why don't you? How the deuce—?"

"Will it be necessary to pull down the whole college to get it, or would only one wing serve your needs?" Weir was politely ready to concede the whole if it appeared to be required.

"Oh, you fellows won't have any of the worry of it." Weldon was willing to spare them. "I've got it all fixed. It's easy enough, and I've had the ropes up there for days, ready to lower it down."

"So you had it fixed that we were going to win the game, too; how did you guess?" Dailey was mildly interested.

"Because I'd have gone in and broken the backs of you all if you hadn't played like fiends." Weldon did not say what he would have done to himself in the event.

"That ball is the very thing that we need for the collection," he went on; "it'll be something to top off the whole, and if the fellows that come after us can do any better in three or four years, why they're welcome to try."

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"But how are we goin' to get it down?" Weir saw serious objections. "It must weigh a ton, and if it isn't bolted down to the tower roof, it ought to be."

"I've seen to all that, son. Something happened to the bolts the other night. The rest of you needn't come up at all; it might be a little bad if we were caught—'defacing the landscape,' I guess they'd call it—so if Nolan will—"

"No you don't. Let you and Nolan get away with the whole thing! Not on your face: The whole push'll go." Weir thought the project about the craziest thing he had yet heard broached, with the possible exception of the one tried after the Pennsylvania game—that they garner a lock of hair from each bald-headed professor in the college—but that was another story. In the present case it needed only the mention of danger in the undertaking to make it positively necessary that every one in the room should rise and vote to be in it. The very daring of the thing and the remembrance that the gilt ball on the highest tower of the college was a land-mark for miles of the surrounding country left nothing further to be urged.

Nolan sensed the opinion of the house: "It's a fool thing;—it generally is when we start at anything—but if Weldon's been lying

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awake working it out, why of course he'll have to see his dream come true. At what time did you intend to start on this nocturnal steeple-jacking of yours, Bobbie?"

"Oh, whenever that crowd of loons out there on the campus get through with their foolery, and the place gets quiet," responded the sane and conservative Bobbie.

"All right, call us when you want us. You, of course, don't want any such thing as sleep; you've been loafing 'round all day." With this Nolan gathered his coat and tie and hat from various places in the room, and followed by the rest of the crowd swung out of the room looking for his own bed.

Alone, Weldon fell thinking of all the nights like this one, in the four years past, when they had planned and argued on the thing that should be added to their collection of crazy mementoes of victory. A cap and gown belonging to the President; a left shoe of each professor in the place; the griddles of the kitchen range, stolen while in use and hot; these and many other remarkable things had been stowed away where no one but the captain of the team of each year and one other knew their resting place, to be handed down to posterity, as it would be represented by other crowds coming after them. He was not at all blind to the incongruity that he, a grown

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man, if he were anywhere but in college, should be keeping up these boy tricks. He had a theory, whether he ever announced it or no, that he would probably be a man a long time. Therefore it was worth while to be a boy as long as he could.

Thinking of something that had not been cleared up in the morning's work—he was giving nearly all of his time this year to the engineering work of the course—he swept his table clear of the odd shin- and nose-guards, loose shoulder-pads, button-hooks, neckties, and classic authors that were consorting on it, and pulling down an immense block of drawing-paper plunged into the measurement of the differential of a variable *helix*, a problem in tunnel work. It was this, his ability to throw himself, as he was doing now, into one thing to the absolute forgetfulness of all other things, which had made him the first man in his class in engineering and at the same time the acknowledged leader of the college in athletics.

Twelve mincing strokes from the little onyx clock on the shelf told him, by their clearness, how quiet the place was, and that the "loons" of the campus had tired and gone to bed.

He went out and down along the corridor, here and there entering a room and pulling the occupant quietly out of bed by the heels. Each

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one, finding himself on the floor in the middle of his room, remembered what it was about and followed out and down the dark corridor in whatever state of dress or un-dress he had been: All but Hunt, who did not awake at all.

At the foot of the long tower stairs they had to pass the Vice-president's room, through the transom of which a light was still burning, showing that that personage was not yet in bed. This, incidentally, had been one of the attractions of the plan, that the ball would have to be gotten down the stairs and carried, or rolled directly past this door: Thereby flouting authority and discipline to its very nose, as it were: Also greatly increasing the chances of detection.

One by one they slipped, like ghosts in a hasty toilet, by the door and up the stairs. There was no stir within the room.

Weldon, master of ceremonies, was first through the highest window of the tower, and out, swinging by his hands, on its scant, steep roof. Then came Nolan and Dailey: There was room for only three out there.

Something surely had happened to the bolts, as Weldon had said. The nuts were turned loose on them away up to the last thread; so that it was but a moment's work to take them off entirely. But it was more than a moment's

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work to get the big, two-hundred-pound ball up off its peg and into the sling that Weldon had provided for it.

"Why didn't you borrow a crane when you were laying this thing out," puffed Dailey.

"The sacred cow was a Gibson Girl beside this. It weighs four tons." Nolan was willing to take oath.

"Lift! You lobsters, lift," gritted Bob; "did you come up here to see the moon?"

"We might as well try to take it down with us as this thing," grunted Dailey. The ball at last came clear of the peg and began to ease down into the noose.

Using the peg as a pulley, Bob swung the rope around it and passed the free end down to the others in the window.

"You can certainly send this thing up for part of your engineering work for the year, Bob. It's the only practical piece of work that I've ever seen the class do." Nolan now for the first time understood the law of pullies.

"Sure!" Dailey saw another side of it. "Mark it: A Moon-light Demonstration of the Conservation of Energy—our energy—: Lower away there below, you lubbers!"

"Easy! Easy! Take your time there." Weldon, knowing something of friction, was guiding the thing down gently to the edge of the little roof; where it swung clear and

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dropped quietly to the level of the window at which the others were standing.

They tugged it in through the window and got it safely to the floor of the landing. Then Dailey, Nolan, and lastly Weldon came down, bringing the ropes and whatever other *evidence* there had been.

When they were all safe inside, the question was as to the methods of lowering it to the ground floor. Dailey and Nolan, having seen the advantages of the pulley, were strongly in favor of letting the others lower it by that method. Weldon, however, vetoed that, and for safety insisted that they carry it, two at a time, taking turns.

It was an ugly matter to negotiate; a heavy ball, with almost nothing to grip by, down a narrow, steep stair.

Nolan and Weldon took the first turn. They seemed to be doing nicely, and Weir was just suggesting that they ought to take a trunk with them, when somebody, one of the two, misstepped and gave a lurch. It threw the whole weight of the thing on Nolan's crushed fingers.

"Uuff!" Nolan grunted and shut his eyes, but the fingers could not hold.

Smash! Bang! The thing went, its copper plating ringing like an anvil. Now it was jumping two steps—now it was taking four at

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a leap. Biff! It carromed off the wall at the first turn and banged over against the railing on the other side. Down it went, crashing past the landings, from wall to railing and back again, taking out an odd spindle; leaping and staggering in its drunken course; down swifter and swifter, straight to the last floor. There it shot as from a cannon, right across the corridor, plumb at the Vice-president's door.

Crash! Came the door from its hinges, and the ball hurtling into the room over-turned the table, smashed the glass doors of the bookcase, and hurled itself madly at a pedestal on top of which sat a bust of Washington. The Father of his Country came down on his patrician nose, and the ball seemed to get a new idea; for it bumped itself once against the wall, started on a line through the door into the other room and there wedged itself under the Vice-President's bed in which the gentleman was lying. He had not attempted to get up, for, knowing that it was an earthquake, he bethought him that one was as safe in bed as anywhere else.

When the quake seemed to have spent its force, he felt that he ought to get up and see what had happened to the rest of the college. Making his way out through the wreck, he saw Weldon standing where there had once been a door.

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The rest of the crowd had fled, but Weldon had feared that the Vice-president might have been hurt. And, too, this seemed almost too serious a thing to run away from: That was part of the code, that when a thing grew serious you could not very well run away. Also, it was his personal affair. He had brought it about.

The Vice-president was making his way gingerly among the débris in his bare feet. Bob felt called to say:

"I'm very sorry, sir. It was an accident."

"It was an ——!" For fully a half minute he stood staring at Weldon, forgetting to complete his sentence. Then he seemed to think of something. He turned, and with the air of an accusing ghost, his long night-gown switching about his bare ankles, stalked into his bedroom, Bob following half way.

The bed stood opposite the door connecting the two rooms, in full view from where Bob was. The Vice-president with one hand pointed to the ball where it lay winking out with one great dent for an eye,—with the other hand he appealed to high heaven:

"Do you mean to tell, mean to tell me—?"

The situation was too much for Bob. He laughed outright; one short, bursting laugh. It was enough. Naturally, he might better have attacked the man with his hands.

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The Vice-president descended to other levels.

"You did that?" His voice bit out into the half darkness.

"Yes, sir, I did it: But I'm trying to tell you, sir, that it was not intentional; that it was an accident." Bob repeated it like an exercise.

"Perhaps you mean that it was an accident that you did *not* kill me. That is quite enough. You may go."

And Bob had several things to think over before he went to sleep.

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II

THERE was the usual after ripple of the play on the morning following the Saint John's game; the comment and gossip of smaller incidents forgotten in the stress of last night. Groups gathered in corridors and on steps to pick up or to enlarge upon things as they came back to mind out of the excitement. But beneath this gossipy over-picking there could be distinctly felt a something of suppressed, intense interest. Something that nobody could speak about, for he did not know what it was or how it ought to be called but which had seeped into everybody's mind. Not that any one had heard the spoken word of a grave thing impending: It was purely that instinctive twitch of unrest which takes possession of bodies of people living very closely together and sets them on the alert.

Whatever it was it would come out at the dinner hour. Then it was that most things came out.

When the President stepped into the dining hall in the midst of dinner, forks halted where they were, in air, sentences of live talk died

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forgotten, shoulders stiffened. His comings were always portents of serious things: Sometimes, things to stand up and cheer for, sometimes, things to make the crowd rise and walk out without a word.

Some, from the habit of long watching his face, could tell to which of the two sorts of things this coming one belonged. More could think of nothing at all but to sit tight and wait.

The suspense was not long, for, in the strong, revealing way that he had of gathering the room to him in his look, he swept the crowd and they saw that this which he brought was neither light nor easy to him, as he began:

"Gentlemen:—My Boys; our thoughts and our acts are the only things which are with any sense of reality ours. And even our acts when they go out from us and begin to take their part on the current seem to be no longer ours. Yet this much is inevitably true, however much we would wish to escape the conclusion, that howsoever innocent or simple these acts may be in their intention, nevertheless when they come to bear consequences—good or ill—those consequences *will* come back at us and we must father them. And it is part of the mock of life, that they are the evil consequences which come back most quickly and surely.

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"One of you, in what I personally believe to have been a spirit of daring fun, has placed an act which has resulted in grave consequence. Whether or not he must have seen that some such result would follow, I am not discussing. It would seem that he must have seen this result, and yet I cannot and will not believe that it was the case.

"That cannot by any possibility change the matter, however much it may change our personal attitude and sympathy in the present case. The action has been done, the consequences have followed in their course, with circumstances aggravating in the extreme. Therefore it falls upon me in the way of a regrettable duty to announce that the one of you who has done this thing is—no longer a member of your college body—and that he is requested to leave the college as quickly as possible. His name is—Robert Weldon."

The President turned, with suspicious quickness, and left the hall. He had not said that the Vice-president had forced this expulsion on the strongest possible presentation of the occurrence of the night before, arguing that it had been done maliciously and with intent because of some matter of examination papers. Nor did he say that he, the President, had been forced to yield, against his judgment and his sense of fair play.

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Rob did not wait for the conclusion of the meal.

With a gesture of excuse to the head table, he rose quietly and made his way, without a look around, to the door. There was protest of the angriest, and sorrow the deepest among the roomful of boys, with whom he was a favored hero. But there is something about an expulsion from the college—for whatever cause, or under what circumstances you will—which sets a circle about the object of it across which no one feels able to go. There was no sign that they could make of their feelings; few even cared to break the circle by watching him as he took his hat from one of the racks in passing, and walked out, by the stairs and toward the campus.

The Lady of the Station, the ticket agent, who had listened to more of the confidences of the crowd than their mothers had, sold him a one-way ticket to the City. She had long since stopped wondering at anything.

"You're going to walk back, I suppose," she volunteered.

"Oh, yes, sure; the walking's good and it's moon-light on the Pike. Probably I'd miss the last train, anyhow; so there's no use letting you and your old company beat me out of thirty cents. On second thought, though, I

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guess I'll shake hands with you, if you would." He put it almost too lightly.

"Is this some new jolly," she wanted to know before she would put her hand through the little window, "or is it just an old one that you've remembered?"

"Well, it's new enough, yes—"

And she, wise woman, looking beneath the elaborate smile which he put to the front, and noticing the every-day suit in which he was starting to town, and remembering that this was just the hour when things happened, if they did happen, she was afraid that she understood too well. She put her hand very gently in his, and said good-bye.

This ceremony of good-bye to the Lady of the Station was one which was performed once a year: Never oftener. No one missed it. It meant many things. It had an added significance, perhaps, in the fact that she was the last of the college personalities that you saw. There had been one who had not gone to say good-bye—But that was a long time ago.

Bob was not sorry that he had performed his rite. He was conscious of a feeling of comfort in it; as though her understanding, for she had understood, would soften a little the retrospect.

He swung himself up into the smoker of the

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twelve, forty-three, and finding an empty seat he lighted a cigar that he found, by habit, in his vest-pocket. Some one had given it to him the night before. Curiously enough, he did not remember as he lighted it that it was his first smoke for three months, and that he was breaking training: many things were being broken. He was only dimly aware that the smoke was very good, for his thoughts were crowding in rather closely.

He was rather glad that he had gotten away so; though when he had left the dining hall he had not thought of leaving on the moment. Now when he was away, he saw that it was better and easier. He had escaped the sympathy of the crowd, which he could not have borne. Also, if he had remained the crowd would have made a protest, and the six others who had been with him the night before would probably have insisted upon leaving with him —Nolan and Weir would force the others into it—and Bob knew how useless that would be with such a man as the President.

All the money remaining from his three months' allowance he happened to have in these clothes that he wore. That was, as he counted it over, eighteen dollars and twenty-four cents. His books did not matter. The clothes he wore would do until he could buy others; he would have no trouble finding work at once.

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His draughting instruments he would have liked to bring with him: But that was past now. There was another matter more serious.

When a fellow student is expelled from college, the question with the crowd is, nearly always: "How'll his mother take it?" It is more often heard when anything grave happens, among even the most thoughtless of college crowds, than any one would expect: For there is no place like a college, where he gets no mothering, for developing a boy's sense of filial tenderness and thought.

Bob Weldon did not have this question to answer to himself: He had seen his mother only in the haze of infant memory. His father was a more definite figure—a tall, clean-looking man whom Bob was growing to resemble very much. Him Bob had known as a boy of ten knows a father who has been his companion and chum through all the years that he can remember. But the father also had died, leaving only those memories, a brilliant name, and a host of friends who had pitied and cuddled "Poor Bob Weldon's boy."

The uncle with whom Bob had lived and who had paid the school and college bills since that time was a busy man, kind when he could find time for it, and exactly the kind of man of whom a lonely boy could not make a chum.

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He had paid the bills and furnished Bob's allowance from year to year without comment. He had no children, and Bob had been given to understand that his education was to lead directly to the one point, that he should fit himself to take up the work of the big contracting company which had taken up Michael Weldon's life and had made him one of the richest men on Long Island.

Bob, thinking of the chiselling look of the gray eyes of his uncle and of the views which he had heard from the old gentleman concerning failures, of whatever sort—he had a way of throwing them utterly to one side, as in earlier days he would have thrown away a broken hammer or a soft drill—did not think that he cared to present himself to his uncle with the story of having been expelled from college, in his senior year, for a fool, kid's trick, as he described it to himself.

It was remarkable how the point of view changed. Last night, as a college boy, he had thought the thing fun: Here, not yet a dozen miles away from the college, sitting among men, one of them, he fully agreed with himself, that any one who had been fool enough to think of such a thing should have been expelled from any respectable college. No; decidedly he was not going to his uncle with that sort of a tale.

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He changed at the Broad St. station and started directly for New York, not particularly because he wanted to go to New York: If he had thought of it he would have said that it was just the place where he did not intend going. He had been taking that way, though, for four years now, and it seemed easier to start that way than any other.

It was too late when he arrived in New York to think of looking for anything that night. He went to what he knew was a fairly good hotel, finished the dinner which had been interrupted that day and went out to look at things. The good noise and lights and smells of the city that had been almost home to him since he was born were then, as ever, music and beauty and breath to him. He walked the streets until midnight, suddenly vitally interested in the crowd, faces of every type and pitch forming the medley of the streets' life—peering, glazed, careless, hunted, live, moping, and some few that could not be classed at all. The night was warm for late November; yet it struck him as being odd that there seemed to be so few who like himself were merely strolling. All of this crowd at least kept up the appearance of being on its way somewhere. Life grinds this into the minds of its atoms in the mighty city; that the atom must keep up the fiction of being needed somewhere—or it

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will die. As the evening went on into late night, however, he began to notice them here and there; those who had lost their place in the procession. They were not always badly dressed, nor, pity of it, were they always young, these drifts, neither, the more pity, were they always men. Yet young and old, men and women, he could see that they had each that lack of stamp and title which marks the drift-log. And he straightened his shoulders and walked in the most direct line to his hotel.

The next morning a big, hurried man in a down-town contracting office looked Bob over, across the top of a desk, as he would look over the top rail of a fence at a horse.

"Who were you with last?" was the rapid answer to Weldon's application for something to do in engineering.

"I'm just out of college; I have never done any work."

"Graduating at this time of year? Rather unusual ain't it?" The man bit his sentences out like lengths of flying tape.

"I didn't graduate, sir: I—was forced to leave college before finishing."

"Uum." This did not seem to interest the man much. "References, then?" he went on, "People in the city?"

"I have none—" Bob was forced to admit—"none that I would care to give."

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"Uum. Don't see anything for you to-day. Leave your name, if you care to."

Bob pulled out his little card-case and scribbled the name of the hotel under his name.

The man looked quickly at the name and said: "Weldon, eh? Why don't you try your namesake? Mike Weldon's got all sorts of work just now. No relation of yours is he?"

"I believe he is—in some way," Bob evaded. His uncle's office was only a few doors down the street, and he had taken a kind of fun out of the idea of starting right here in a rival office. Now he saw that New York is really a very small place to men of Michael Weldon's range. And that it was liable to be embarrassing.

"You won't mention me to my—to Mr. Weldon, if you please, if you should be talking to him?"

"Not me, son. I've never seen you, if that's what you mean. Play your own game; whatever it is. Good day: good luck."

"Thank you, sir: Good day."

Other interviews, a dozen or so the first day and as many more on the second, were not all like this one. Some were more easy-going; some seemed more promising; none was more fair. But the practical results of all were the same—"Nothing doing," as most of them put

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it, or even more explicit as he heard it from one florid gentleman, "Nixey: You don't get a look here without somebody's name that we know."

By the evening of the third day he had long since exhausted all the places which he had marked from the newspapers, and had gotten well through the lists of contractors' offices in the directory. Also, his money was running low, and he needed an overcoat. He was not yet ready to admit that he was discouraged or that there was no use of trying further. He knew where he could find work with a pick; and he would not so much mind doing it when he might have to. That could come later. To-night he was dragged out: More completely tired than he had ever been after a game. Three days of almost constant walking, with an ankle in which the swelling refused to go down, was a thing for which he had never trained.

The Battery park is a good enough place in its way. Many people use it both as a sun-parlor and as a bedroom. But as a place to sit on an afternoon that is almost of early winter it is ill-chosen. The fog on the raw wind silts through thin clothes. The stubbornly dying grass is too mournful a reminder of better things.

Sitting there, Bob looked across at another

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bench on which a man was crouching, shoulders humped, his narrow coat collar turned up, beard showing a growth of a week or two, his hat flattened down over his eyes—one of the drifts. Unconsciously Bob tilted his hat back and squared his own massive shoulders. He had caught himself beginning to crouch as the other was doing.

"That's it! Buck up, ole man; you're not out. You're only down, an' you don't have to stay."

The slang was enough like the slang of the college to sound friendly, and Bob was glad without knowing why, to see a heavy-built fellow wearing a coarse suit of gray and an enormous red sweater coming toward him. He did not even think to resent it when the man came up and laying a great paw on his shoulder sank his fingers deep into the muscles.

"Fine! Fine! Where 'd you git it, Sport?"

"What, the muscle? Oh, football, I suppose."

"That's it! Just what I thought. Got the college rags on you yet." The man closed one eye and peered at him from the other like a robin. Then he put the all-important question: "Broke?"

Curiously enough it seemed to Bob, who had never known the want of money except in a

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school boy's way, an entirely natural question for one stranger to ask another. He answered whimsically:

"Not quite, but I will be to-morrow, or the next day, if that'll do."

"Now you're talkin': Now we know where. Say, can you fight?"

"If I had to, I suppose. Why? What do you want?"

"Me? What do *I* want? I don't want anything. You're it. You want the thing, and I've got it. You want a job, don't you?"

"I guess I'd better have one pretty soon—or—" and he waved his hand to point out the figure crouching on the farther bench.

"That's it! You've got the straight tip, Cubby. Don't let go your grip or you'll sink. Good: You've got an eye and a shoulder. Listen to the band, then." And the man, leaning well back on his heels, with his hands in his pockets, began:

"You know Cuber?"

"Cuba? Yes, I ran away from school to start for there in Ninety-eight. Got a fine trouncing when they sent me back," Bob reminisced.

"That's the place: Fine place to keep away from in hot weather: I was there that year, but Teddy didn't see me: I had too many engagements in the little places where they

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keep cool on hot drinks. Fine business that. You can try it when you go down."

"Down?" Bob queried.

"That's the dope; down to little Cuber for yours. It's this way, if I've got to spell it for you; there's a trolley strike on down there in Havana, and the little yellow brothers of ours down there that's been hired to run the cars is brave enough when it comes to takin' a pot shot at you from behind a tree or a hill, but when it's standin' on the front end of a car while a howlin' mob of the populace is threatenin' to heave the pavement at you, why then they're not there. They won't stick: See?"

"Yes, it's plain so far: But where do I come in?"

"You? You come in right at the head of the procession, right up with the mourners; right up on the front end of the little old car, with a good baseball bat in your hand to shoo off the common rabble."

"Yes, but I can't run a trolley," Bob objected.

"Did I ask you for any papers on that? Who wants you to run the old juice wagon? Do I look like a man that stooped his back over a brake-bar all day? You don't have to run anything, the little fellows is only too glad to work only they're scared to death by the crowd of toughs that's runnin' the town and holdin'

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up the lines. They can't stand the attentions of the crowd. That's your job, see? You're to stand up beside the little man at the front end and show your shoulders, and give him moral encouragement—that's what they call it —with a young wagon tongue."

"Well, what's the offer? I guess I'm open to almost anything."

"That's the way: Now you're sober! It's three dollars a day, an' your bran, from the day you leave New York till they land you back here—beautiful skies, winter in the tropics, an' all that gas just like a tourist ad'— an' you travel first class, with a porter to shine your shoes. An' they need it, Cub. Come on right over to the Captain's office an' git it fixed."

Taking Bob's arm he escorted him across the north side of the park to an office in the lowest part of Broadway, where he left him in a good-sized waiting room and went into an inner office, apparently to consult the "Captain."

There was no sign about the place indicating a firm name, nor anything to show what sort of business was conducted there. Bob judged rightly, however, that it was the headquarters of a strike-breaking agency.

After a short wait he was called into the inner office, where a steely-eyed, quiet-looking

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man, who would have passed for a detective, looked him over.

"Canfry here," he said, indicating Bob's conductor who stood by, "tells me that you've agreed to go on this business. You understand that it's likely to mean trouble?"

"Yes, sir, I think I understand."

"Very good. The boat sails at one o'clock to-morrow. You will come to this office at eleven and get the money to buy your own ticket, first-class, to Havana. Canfry will be with you, to see that you get aboard safely."

Bob smiled at the note of caution, but had no thought of resenting it. He could understand that this man was accustomed to handle men as he found them.

The crowd that Canfry marshalled the next morning and escorted personally over to the office of the Ward Line seemed, to Bob, to consist of about sixty men, rough, heavy-set fellows, nearly all of whom seemed to have been acquainted before. Probably they had been at this thing for years, facing critical things in many parts of the country and going away quietly when the trouble was over, without its being known, who they, collectively, were.

When they had their tickets they marched, by twos and threes, but all under the eye of Canfry, down Wall Street to the boat, and

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took possession of their state-rooms with the least possible ostentation.

Bob going to the stern of the boat which lay out into the river was interested in watching the tug, "Michael G. Weldon," pulling a string of barges up the river.

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III

WHEN he first saw her, standing at the very foremost point of the promenade deck, half leaning over the rail as the "Morro" worked carefully down the channel toward the Narrows, her eager, delicately-cut profile brilliantly relieved against the mist banks beyond, her eyes fairly seeming to pray for the South-land whither they were pointed, she seemed such a slip of a girl that Bob wondered why she should be travelling alone. Probably she wasn't: somebody would turn up to be with her. But when she turned and he, guardedly watching her from the corner of the rail, saw the look of unchecked girlish loneliness in her eyes as they brushed by him unseeing, he knew that she was more, much more, alone than he himself was. It was not the lonesomeness of leaving home—he had seen that in the faces of two school teachers as the boat had drawn away from the dock. No one had been at the steamer to wave a handkerchief to her, and she must have come directly to the farthest end of the boat from

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the dock; perhaps she did not care to hear the exuberance of leave-takings.

As she passed him at the corner of the forward cabin, he straightened himself, to give her the full passage, and caught himself wishing that his suit had not begun to look quite so seedy. He had the grace to kick himself for that; for wishing even in thought to intrude himself upon her notice. But he could not get from his mind the thought of her face, with its pencilled girl-lines stamped by a something which had no right with her years.

Bob has since been told that he merely mooned the greater part of this, and that she was just a pretty girl, about whom it pleased him to draw rings of romantic sadness. He, however, has always stood for the objective truth of his first view.

He did not see her again until after dinner when, happening to pass the entrance of the ladies' cabin, he glanced in and saw her in an animated cross-fire of talk with a dark, heavy-mustached man, evidently a Cuban. Weldon could hear nothing of the talk; which did not greatly matter, for it was in Spanish, with which he had only a class-room acquaintance; but from the manner of the two he was sure that it was a ship-board meeting. He had seen many such on his two trips to Europe escorting his aunt.

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He had thought many times during the afternoon of the girl, because, as he told himself, he had nothing else to do. That her face could have changed from the one that he had idealized a few hours ago, limpid in the depth of its girlish sadness, to the glinting, scintillating surface of the cleverly careless woman was more than his mind could at all take in. It was certainly the same girl, and half-consciously he moved nearer to them and sat down at one of the writing desks, with a vaguely formed idea of writing a letter, though to whom or about what he did not think.

Once she must have noticed him looking at her, for as he dropped his eyes quickly there was just a perceptible little catch in the run of her sprightly, half-warbling talk. Then it flowed on again, while the man, plainly fascinated, did his best to keep up the murmuring, modulated accompaniment at which the men of the South are so clever with their women.

Weldon was plainly ill-mannered. It is even possible that he intended to be so. And he could not but have been annoying, for again he noticed that little, stuccoed hesitation in her voice that showed that she felt herself being studied. There were a dozen other people in the cabin, but he gave himself the credit of thinking that it was by his presence that she was worried.

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When he had gathered to himself enough of the shreds of his decency to remember that he was practically spying upon a woman, he arose to leave. Just as he got to his feet, the girl rose with the air of having heard what she desired to know, and by her manner dismissed the man as finally as though in words she had told him that she did not wish to see him more. The two leaving the cabin reached the exit at almost the same time, and Bob, moving aside to allow her to pass, caught in her downcast eyes as she nodded to thank him the same expression of wearied, almost frightened loneliness which he had seen there earlier. Then as she raised her eyes for the shortest of moments he thought that he understood her look: An appeal, a pleading, almost, not to be misjudged.

She passed quickly across the landing of the forward stairs and out the little door leading to the promenade deck. He wondered if she were going out to the place where he had first seen her, but he, not wishing to appear to be following her, went along back to his stateroom.

The sleepy, heavy-browed mechanic who had the lower berth of his room was already in bed, and Bob did not care to disturb him by turning on the light. He fumbled about and found a magazine which he had bought that morning, and a villainous-looking cigar that

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somebody had given him, and went out to the men's cabin to read.

The reading, however, was not a success. The cigar more than verified its looks, and four turbulent Cubans in a game of *siete y media* at his elbow were flying at each other's throats over the nickels which they were winning or losing. He understood just enough of their shouts to make the thing tantalizing. After a few minutes he could stand it no longer, and throwing the magazine down he went out to the deck and tossed the cigar over the rail. He stood looking after it for a few moments, remarking to himself that its taste would probably discourage the practice of smoking among the fishes for some time. Then without bothering as to where he was going he started up the long promenade forward, past the row of lighted state-room windows.

As he came up to the door leading from the women's cabin, through which the girl had come out, he stopped, not wishing to go farther up the deck for fear of meeting her. He noticed the iron ladder leading up to the captain's quarters and the bridge. He thought he would like to go up and talk to the Captain, a very likeable old sailor whom he had met once in New York with his uncle. His foot was almost on the bottom step of the ladder, when he heard a man coming out from the di-

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rection of the cabin. Turning carelessly to see who it was, he recognized, in the shaft of light from within, the face of the man whom he had seen talking to the girl. He was followed by another man whose countenance Bob could not see. His voice, though, as the first man waited for him outside the door, was plainly American, out of the West.

"Who's the girl you picked up? Say, she's a ripper."

Weldon, standing against the darkness of the black stairway, felt rather than saw the sneer which a man of the Latins has for the woman who breaks the conventions of his race.

"She is one enchantress—is it?—surely." The Cuban answered in his labored, mincing English.

"What's her name? Introduce me. You've certainly got her captivated."

"Her name? I do not know her name. *Que va!* Is it necessary to be introductioned? And as for the captivation," he threw out the palms of his hands, "I am to assure that I had no part: She—"

He did not say what "she" had done, for Bob, stepping quickly out of the shadow, swung one deft thud of a blow at his face which sent the Cuban down against the lowest line of the rail.

Whether it was just the fighting spirit that

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had been quelled in him by the things of the last few days, breaking loose now, or whether it was a real wish to slay people for the sake of the girl, Bob has had to argue many times since. He did not stop to argue it then, for the Cuban was getting to his feet, and the American also seemed to think that he ought to crowd over and see what should be done about it. The first officer of the ship came around the corner of the cabin just at that moment, however, and neither appeared to see anything to be gained by a reopening of the question. They moved on down the deck: The Cuban declaiming to the wind something about the morrow. The officer passed along, apparently without having noticed anything.

As he stood looking down the deck after the two, and trying to arrange with himself, as to whether he felt foolish or heroic over the affair, Bob heard a step on the ladder, and turning, saw the girl, herself, coming down the stair.

"Thank you!" she said as she reached the deck.

"Oh, I didn't mean—I beg your pardon—" Bob was promptly flustered.

"You beg my pardon?" she wondered.

"I mean I'm very sorry—I hoped that you had not heard." He managed to make himself lucid.

"And I am not sorry that I did hear, for

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after all it is worth more to be shown that some one is willing to strike a blow for me than to have been spared the embarrassment of hearing: That is only a part of many other things."

"Yes, I was sure of that," he answered. He had no very clear notion of what it was, but he was entirely ready to subscribe to it. "But is it necessary?" he went on, seeming to take up her unspoken thought where she had left it.

"Do you mean does it have to be; what you saw inside there? You were watching, I remember."

"Oh, I did—"

"Please do not try to apologize. I do not think that you are very good at that."

"Can't we leave it that way, then, please? And, forgive me, isn't it something in which I could help?"

She seemed to sway and hesitate a moment, as though she would tell him something. Instead she gently gave him her hand, saying:

"You have helped very much: More than I can tell you. And if you can remember what you really think, and forget what you see, it will be very, very good."

And she was gone before he could think of an answer.

He did not think that he cared to go up to

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see the Captain. He strolled around to the forward end of the promenade, where he had first seen the girl, perhaps to see if he could see that thing in the south for which her eyes had seemed to leap.

She, herself, must have gone up to see the Captain. Did he, the Captain, know what this thing was? No, that did not seem likely. She must have been standing at the head of the ladder when he had been at the foot of it. They would have met half-way if he had gone on up.

What could the thing be? She had said that this, the talk with the man, was a part of many other things. It was not a flirtation. The man must have some part in the matter, whatever it was. Yet they were certainly strangers.

He stood there at the rail puzzling it over, while the officer of the deck made his rounds one after another far into the night. It did not seem to come any clearer, so he gave it up, or, more accurately, carried it along with him when he went down and invested his last whole dollar in a certain amount of the good will of the drowsy under-purser. He did not seem to get a great deal of the good will for his dollar, because the autocrat of the booking-list was not at all charmed at being roused from a comfortable nap in his chair. But he did get to

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see the list itself, which was really more to the purpose.

Going over the list he eliminated the names of those women, girls rather, who were plainly booked with brothers or fathers or mothers. Then he put aside those in the case where two girls were booked together, as with the two school teachers whom he had noticed.

It left only three names, and out of those he easily picked the one which he was sure belonged to the girl. Mary Dunleaven Mercaderes, he was certain that this was the right one. Mercaderes: that would account for the Spanish: Her family name was Spanish; though she had written it in the English way. And Dunleaven: That meant an Irish mother. And it also accounted for her English which she must have learned as a child.

He seemed to have made some progress, as he pushed back the book to the officer: It is always something to have fixed names. Repeating the name on the way up the stairs, he stopped on the first turn to reflect that he had already named her: That he had been using a name to his mind for her all day. Remembering that tantalizingly fairy thing that seemed to merely breathe itself about her face, in which an American woman is in great danger of looking dowdy or worse; which, on the

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Spanish-bred woman, who does not wear it but merely lets it be about her face, is so often a nebulous halo of real sweetness: Remembering how it clung like a mist wreath about the wonder of her beautiful girlishness, he was conscious that he had all day been calling her The Mantilla Girl.

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IV

THE next morning, Sunday, Bob was standing in the sun on the after-deck wondering how he was going to get shaved, now that his money was almost entirely gone. He had a few pieces of odd change in his pocket, but he was not sure that there was enough to get shaved with, according to the piratical prices of things aboard. A hand was laid, somewhat gingerly, on his shoulder, and he turned to recognize, from the cut of his shoulders and from his voice when he spoke, the man who had been with the Cuban the night before.

"You're the man that struck Mr. Guiterez last night."

"Is that so?" said Bob, not at all inclined to make the preliminaries easy.

"Yes; and he has sent me to you."

"Where is he?" questioned Bob.

"He's laid up in his state-room with a bad jaw."

"Should have sent you to the ship's doctor, then." Bob thought he was beginning to understand what the man meant by being sent,

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but he would make him come out with it in so many words.

"My name's Witherbee," the man tried again, "an' I'm fr'm Michigan, an' Mr. Guiterez says to tell you that his honor's been tramped on. Fer me, I don't set no great store in such things, but he's bound that he's been insulted, an' he's sent me round to demand an apology."

"Mr. Witherbee from Michigan," Bob repeated, "I am glad to know you, but very sorry to see you in such bad company. Doesn't it seem to strike you that this fellow comes pretty near being a scoundrelly pup," he went on in the spirit of a missionary.

"I ain't talkin' none about that or this. He sent me to you for this here apology business; an' he said that if you wouldn't say that you'd apologize—"

"Yes, what then, if I wouldn't?"

"Why, then he said that if you wouldn't he'd post you up on the ship that you was a coward, an'—"

"Yes, go on with the rest of it," Bob commanded.

"An' that he'd tell the whole ship what the trouble was."

"Where's his room?" was all that Bob answered.

"I can show you that all right. But he

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ain't fit to be looked at. It's a fact: He's a sight."

"I'm not going to photograph him. Go ahead and show me where it is."

The man led the way down to number twelve, on the starboard side of the boat, which room, apparently, the Cuban occupied alone. He was lying in the lower berth, his jaw twisted to one side, and an enormous red handkerchief tied under his chin and up over his face, looking for all the world, as Bob remembered afterwards, like the picture of a Thomas cat after a mid-night foray, which he had once pasted into an old scrap-book of his.

"Ha! you come to make the amendment, sir."

For answer, Bob seated himself on the edge of the berth, and took the fellow gently by the weasand. For five level minutes he spoke clearly and definitely on the evils of speaking lightly of any woman, of the dangers attendant upon the practice, of the certainty that in the present case nothing but sudden and unhallowed death would be the outcome, that his, the Cuban's bones would be broken, even down to the very smallest one, and that he would be thrown into the sea: Furthermore, he went on to make it plain that if while they were on this ship the slightest mention of the incident were made, then new and more hor-

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rible torments would be invented. Once the man tried to wriggle his hand under the pillow for something that was there, but Bob caught the hand and twisted till the bones crunched, and the man's eyes begged. Then Bob went out, and meeting Canfry got a fairly good cigar from him.

The day passed dully as the boat made her way down to the Diamond Shoals light ship, off Cape Hatteras, turning it toward the middle of the afternoon, and starting, southwest, down the second long leg of the route. The tourists who were shipped by Canfry had received orders not to congregate much together, and to appear as far as possible like casual travelling companions. Bob did not quite understand the reason for this until he put the question lightly to Canfry.

"Why, it's for gentlemen rangers like you that don't belong rightly to a push like this, that ought to be back in college. Don't you see, the company has consideration for your delicate feeling and don't want the rabble of mechanics an' strong-arm men here to be steppin' over the paddock and rubbin' noses up to you."

"All right, go ahead; you'll probably tell *some* truth before you stop, if you're let go long enough." Bob had liked Canfry and had begun to understand him from the first. He

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was willing to let him come to the thing in his own way.

"An' what's more," Canfry went on along his own line, "can't you see that it'd be a disgrace to civilization to have a young sprig of the higher education like you brought in to the country as contract labor: Not that I ever expect to see you workin', but that's what they'd call it. An', besides woundin' the delicate feelin's of our gentle yeller brothers, we'd all be shipped back to old New York on the same boat or a sooner one."

"That's the reason, then, that we were told to buy our tickets?"

"Did you think it was just to let you see what the feel of money was like? Sure, that'd be pretty near dead proof that you was contracted for, if they could prove that the Old Man bought your tickets, wouldn't it? An' if you all sat at the one table an' trained together you'd look a little too much like a football team to pass, even with our dear little cousins, for a set of gentlemen travellers that all happened to take the same boat for Cuber.

"That's all plain as mud now, ain't it? 'Specially when I tell you that these little fellers down here's regular dead nuts on anything like contract labor, down-treadin' the poor man an' that. They're all so mucky,

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down-an-out poor, except just a few, that there's no such thing as a poor man in the country. But they're out hot-foot for him just the same; on the long shot, I guess, that there might be some feller in the country poorer than they are, themselves. Now if you've got through interviewin' me, I'll say that I refuse to discuss the matter further, an' go look for my little downy bunk—great thing, fine institution, that bunk: I'm gettin' back the sleep I lost in Denver the last two weeks."

Weldon sat through the long afternoon, and again long into the evening, on the after-deck with his feet slung high upon the rail, watching the waste of water glide dreamily by, and letting the salty freshness of the now warming sea mist work its way with his lungs and his blood.

He had not seen the girl of the mantilla, as he still insisted on naming her to himself, through the whole day. Maybe she was a bad sailor; or was it that she wished to keep out of sight and that she was having her meals sent to her room? A man with a lantern passed along the deck to look at the whirling trawl thing that wheezed at the corner of the rail, the pale, weird flickers of blue from the points of the masts took their answering tongues of ghost light from the tips of the choppy little waves, and whiles a long, lazy

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swell from some distant storm rolled the ship gently in its sweep and went on stretching itself across the width of the sea. Bob had gotten back nicely and comfortably into school days; days that were not yet a week away, but that seemed even now as though they had been gone through in another life. He was threshing some question of ethics with Nolan —he had taken some optionals in the scholastic work along with his engineering, or was it fighting over the matter of some baseball record with Weir; he could not remember which it was, when he heard at his elbow a voice that he had been hearing, beneath his consciousness, all day.

"May I stay a little here?" There was an almost certain note of appeal in the words, as though she fled to rest here from some pursuing thing; from her own thought or from some more tangible trouble.

Bob clutched himself up out of his long, yawning position, trying not to look altogether foolish in his delight. The side of the deck was dark enough, but even there his effort was not a success; for she saw the attempt and was herself confused and conscious.

His manners saved him, for he bethought him to draw over a chair to the rail for her. When she was settled and tucked in and the mantilla had been given a pat or two and al-

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lowed to fall its own way, she was ready to go on lightly enough:

"Would it be a breach of—of anything to ask what you were thinking out when I came: I'm sorry if I disturbed you."

"Why, er—at least you can be sure that it was some nonsense or other. Let me see —yes, that was it: I was arguing out a tangle in ethics with Nolan—an old school chum." It would have seemed almost a shame to have told how recent a chum Nolan was. "We had gotten," he went on, "well I can't think just—"

"Ethics? That's about the right and the wrong of it, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's nearly all that I could ever get out of it: The why and the why not."

She seemed to be coming through some tangle of thought apart from his answer.

"Yes, I guess that is what I want, after all."

She was silent for some little time, and he waited for her to say what it was.

"Mr. Weldon,"—she must have been investing in the good will of the purser—he hoped that it was not *her* last dollar—but not even by the turn of an eye-lash in the dark did he show surprise, or his joy— "did you ever steal?"

"Eh? You mean—? Why sure, yes, I stole once—several times I guess, for that mat-

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ter—but once, I remember, I stole the gilt ball off the college tower." He had done his thoroughbred best to take it as a matter of course, to make it easier for her to get started with whatever it was that was in her mind.

"Yes?" She seemed willing to take up his thread, and come around to her purpose in that way. "Did you want it badly, the ball?"

"Yes, I guess I did. I must have," he added a little bitterly.

Whether she noticed the bitterness or not, was not plain, for she went on:

"And you got it?"

"Oh, yes. We got it."

"You weren't alone, then?"

"No, there were six of us in it. And we got the thing—well—that is, we didn't quite get it where we wanted: Something happened."

"That is the wonder: Does something always have to happen, whether one is all alone or not?"

He knew that it was not a question; at least not one to which she expected an answer from him; so he gave her her own time to work it out for herself. He could feel the under-current of something that was preying deeply upon her, but there was no way in which he could help.

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She seemed now to come to some resolution, for she sat up to face him:

"Do you think that you could—steal—I mean really?"

"Eh, er—" he could not quite hold himself steady.

To make it easier, she tried to help him with it, "do you think that any one, that is, one who is—like our own kind of people, could do it?"

"You mean could a fellow—steal? For himself, no, it does not seem that he could. There couldn't be anything that could make it worth the while." It was merely his own half-lazy way of covering his depth of feeling in the matter.

"For another, then," she probed again.

"That would be harder, a great deal harder to say. There could be so many things that would—would—" he fought for the right word—"that would make it harder to see the way through."

"Suppose it were money?" She seemed to come at a new side of it now.

"Money that somebody else needed? That way? No, I—I don't see how it could do."

"Suppose that it were not money, but that it meant money, in a way, and a great, great deal more than money on the other side?" She seemed to lose her way, in the effort to

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explain herself while at the same time she told him nothing.

Again he tried, as he had tried the night before, to come at the thing in a man's way:

"I don't know what the answer is: I can't see the way. But can't you tell me, just a little, and let me help—there must be some way," he almost begged. They had both risen at this note, and she stood, her face half turned out over the waters.

"Do you want to help?" It was hardly more than a whisper, and then her voice went on again, gaining a little strength and steadiness: "Are you sure that you care to help? Are you not forgetting what we have just been saying? And you have understood, only too clearly."

She did not wait for his answer—he had none ready, in any case—but turned to ask lightly; and with no apparent meaning:

"What time is it, please?"

He pushed his watch out into a shaft of light, and let her see that it was half-past eleven.

She seemed to glance carelessly enough at it, and then she asked again with no apparent consequence:

"Where is that man?"

"Guiterez, you mean?" It did not seem that there could be any other in the mind of

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either. "I saw him this morning in his berth: Why? Why does he need to enter?" he questioned, as though he would have the man forgotten utterly between them.

"Only this; suppose he were to see me out here with you at this hour: What would he think of me?"

Bob jammed his hands angrily into his pockets, it was all that he could think to do, and blamed himself for keeping her there.

"No, you need not apologize; you could hardly have helped it in any case. But think of it the other way," she went on, "suppose you saw me out here at this hour with him?"

"Oh, that would be different!" he was quick to protest.

"You don't quite mean that, I guess. Do you mean that it is entirely proper so long as I am with you, but that it would be—different, if I were with him?"

And she was gone before Bob could think of any of the self-debasing things that he thought of during the next half-hour, as he stood over the rail, watching the tumbling wash of the boat. The various sorts of ninnies and jackanapes which he carefully named over and fitted accurately to himself seemed to relieve his mind a little, but they did not at all remove the tangle. She had put him entirely, foolishly in the wrong, and yet that

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did not explain what she had veiled under the lightness of her talk. Several times he had been sure that she was on the point of breaking down and letting him see the reality.

What could she have meant? Could he steal, he quoted to himself, and for somebody else: Money? That seemed out of the question. He had no difficulty, from the wisdom learned of many shopping excursions in attendance upon his aunt, and from the young women who attended her card parties and dinners, in recognizing the girl's tailor-mades and the fluffy things which she wore when the mantilla was present as the very rightest things, stamped and warranted by those who know and do what is always right in these matters. No, he quoted again, not money, itself, but meaning money on one side and a great deal more than money on the other. If she had been at all other than just herself, he would have thought—he did not know what he would have thought, but he abused himself roundly for even thinking that he might have had such a thought of her.

Yet, certainly she had been testing him in some way, she had not been jesting; and it was equally certain that he had not stood the test, for she had put him aside in the end by recalling his own words.

He stretched himself out again in his long

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chair and fought it over to himself until he fell asleep and dreamed that he had stolen the great reading desk out of the college auditorium. The girl was there, too, somehow, and she said that it would have to be remodelled to make a bird-cage. The cold spray waked him and he went in to his room.

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V

JUST why she should have chosen that place of all others he could not by any process explain to himself. She was not of the sort of women, he felt, who choose a chair and then sit and wait for the inevitable to come along and take the other chair. She was mistress of more direct and capable methods, provided that she wanted the inevitable to come. Yet there she was: And she must have deliberately chosen that nook, a darkened, protected little corner, where the signal-station box jutted into the after cabin, and where there was possible place for only two chairs. Certainly she must have chosen it with an eye to the inevitable, for when Bob came out of the smoking room into the sunset of Tuesday the inevitable was there. Guiterez, whom he had seen passing the open port of the smoking room a moment before, was in the other chair. Bob forgot everything of the lesson which she had taught him the night of their talk, as he turned sharply on his heel and started for the farthest part of the deck. There he stalked gloomily back and forth

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along the squared-off rail, making the very most of his wrath as he came in sight of them once at each crossing of the deck.

He was not watching them: What business of his was it, with whom she chose to sit? But the man was a scoundrel; of course he was. He had heard it said that day that he was some kind of revolutionary agent, mixed up in some kind of plot that at the moment was being hatched to overturn the Cuban government. Well, it might as well be that as something else. But was there something between the two? Could it be that she, too, was entangled in the affair! Then she was just some kind of adventuress: Then they were confederates, and he had played his bit of heroics the other night, knocking Guiterez down, only to be secretly laughed at by her. And what a fool she had attempted to make of him the night before last,—he had not seen her since,—testing him to see if she could use him for their purposes. Oh, she had done it cleverly, and completely. What kind of scheme would it be in which she would have thought him a help. He had understood, from a diligent study of certain lively novels of adventure, that such people were bound to be clever. She had been abundantly so. She had plumbed him and sounded him and made an egregious fool of him, and now they two

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were up there enjoying the thing. He was sure of it, for the deck had by this time been almost deserted and he could hear their voices coming back along the wind to him: The man's, curving up and down in sound in its peculiar, sliding way; the girl's, piquantly, maddeningly gay and alluring; now stilled for a moment, while she listened to something from the man, now rising and rippling away into cadences of dulcet Spanish laughter.

He did not know that he was now actually watching them and listening in a brazen effort to hear what they were saying—probably it would have made no difference if he had known. When he had fully settled with himself that she was a seasoned woman of the world, and that—for the matter of that—no woman was to be trusted, he happened to come to that side of the deck where they were in view just as the officer of the watch came along past them carrying his lantern. In the glint of the light he caught one full sight of the girl's face, standing out strongly from the encircling darkness.

She was looking full at the man, his face being turned away following the passing figure of the watch. Written upon her face, in lines that seemed to be torn into the very flesh, there was scorn, and horrible, unutterable, loathing disgust. And back of that, he

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could see, in gentler lines, the soft, yearning loneliness that belonged to that face. He dropped his eyes, as though he had looked with flash-light upon a naked human heart. There was no need, though, for the glint of light passed, the man turned back his head to her, and her voice went on, carelessly, trippingly.

Weldon did not walk any more. He threw himself into a deck-chair, out of sight of them, and as the watch passed him on the other side he blessed the crooked-legged old stumbler, and his light.

Pacing the deck in blind futile fury, as he had been doing a moment back, he had not known what had taken possession of him. He knew now. And a great, surging wave of tenderness and pity—and of more than these came up out of the clean boy's heart of him, throbbing into the life of him the pulse of his heart's desire.

There was no need to wonder for the meaning of other things: Nothing in all the world could change that moment's reading of that face. And all other things were little, and counted for nothing in the scale.

He sat there for hours, as it seemed, thinking of nothing, counting nothing, only letting it all flow through his mind in a reverie of tenderness.

How long it was he could not have told,

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even approximately, but probably an hour had not passed when he heard an irritated step coming down the deck from the direction where the two were, and looking up he saw Guiterez, strutting high on his Cuban heels, come around the corner of the cabin and slam himself into the smoking room. It was palpable that he had been dismissed, and that in no softened way. But Weldon could not keep his mind from the thought that the girl had suffered long to learn something from him. It could not be that she was in any way in his power, for she had dared to rebuff him.

Weldon rose and moved over to the farther side of the deck, to see if the girl was perhaps still there. In the shadow of the nook where they had been seated he could just trace the outlines of her figure, as she sat there alone. Evidently she had no fear that the man would come back.

He wanted to go to her now, to let her know what had been revealed to him in that flash. But no; he would, in very pity, give her a little time to be herself again after her ordeal. Sitting there, she could see him, and would know that he would come to her, in a little, if she wished him to come.

Suddenly she rose and started down the promenade: Towards him, he thought, and he started to meet her. But she stopped, just

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out of the shaft of light from one of the ports of the cabin, and put out her hand to stop him where he was.

She stood there for a moment or so, looking, it seemed, in through the port. Then she motioned again, for him to come on, and as he passed the port he looked in and saw, what she had evidently been watching, Guiterez at a card table betting loudly, and apparently settled there for the evening.

Then he came to her and took one of her hands in his two.

She spoke first, and with such a depth of understanding of what he had meant to say that it was as though he had spoken the words.

"You are ready, then?"

"Ready: For whatever it is that is yours," he answered.

"Come, then. It is now."

And she led him swiftly along the outside rail, then in, through one of the small side passages, and down the long passage of the port side between the lines of rooms.

He could feel the girl's hand tremble, as though it were she who was to be put to the test. A tremor seemed to run over her as though she would faint, and in tenderness he felt that he must take her in his arms, and compel her to tell him what this thing was and

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let him meet it alone: As a man ought. Still she led him, almost running along the passage now, until she turned and drew him into the little cross-way leading in to numbers twelve and fourteen.

She tried the door on the left, number twelve —he remembered that it was the one belonging to Guiterez, and when she found it securely locked, she seemed to falter, as though she had not remembered to expect that. And then she beat upon it with her little hands, not loudly, but frantically, wildly, as a bird might. Then she turned to him, begging, pleading:

"Break it! Oh, please! You are strong, please!"

Always has he been glad that he took no time to think or to ask anything, but lifted her gently a little to one side and gave the door one quick, short heave as he would hit a man in the line.

It slammed back open and he caught himself by the jamb to keep from stumbling into the room. As she would have slipped in past him he caught her by the arms.

"Let me do this," he almost commanded, "it is my part."

"No! No! You could not be sure. And there's no time to tell you what it is. Stand in the passage: Please, dear, quick." She

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was neither asking nor questioning, for she was sure in her knowledge that he would stand there in the passage; and that so long as he were alive no one would come to interfere. That was the tribute of her eyes in faith in him.

As he dropped her arms, she hurried into the room and he went to his post, at the head of the little passage.

She was right, of course; it was better that she should do whatever was to be done within there. It was right, because she was doing it. There needed no other argument. And she should have her time for it. Neither the captain of the ship, nor all of its passengers, nor any of them singly would pass the head of that little passage way: And he glowered hard at an innocent passer-by, who wondered to see an athletic young fellow, braced like one of the gladiators, scowling down upon him as he passed. That man went on his way, and another passed. He had heard the girl turn on the light in the room. Now she was pulling and tugging at things like grips or suit-cases; searching for something. She was working quickly but very deftly with no unnecessary noise, holding herself well in hand. He could almost sense through the walls of the room the feeling of repressed, desperate excitement with which her actions were charged.

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What was that now? A ripping, cutting kind of sound, as of leather being slashed. She must want something from one of the grips which was locked. Could this man have something that was hers? Money? No, not that. Jewels? It would be the wrong way to try to get them. Letters, then? He fought the thought back as though it were the master temptation of his life. He would not think of this girl, suddenly so dear to him, brought, even in thought, into the fear of any man.

Now he could hear the rustle of sheets of paper, and he could feel her standing under the light looking at them to be sure.

Why could not somebody come along, that he might have something to do, or something to quarrel with besides this thought!

No one came: And now he heard the light in the room go out and the girl came into the passage.

Her face that had been before white and drawn tense with the effort of her control was now relaxed and gloriously resplendent in its deep breath, as though of victory: But tired —tired.

She swayed and stumbled, almost, as he took her arm, and started with her up the main passage, away from the place. Steadying her by her free arm—the other seemed to grip tightly the folds of the mantilla in front, and to be

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crowding something with those folds in against her breast—he led her gently until they came to the first cross passage, making out upon the deck again. Here she turned toward the outside.

Weldon was sure that now he would understand all.

As they crossed the little promenade, she seemed to fairly skim in her eagerness to reach the rail: As though there would be the end: And the mist-like, wraith beauty of her figure in the dim light turned him cold, in the thought that she would melt away over the waters.

He linked his arm within hers, as though he would hold her more surely, and together they bent over the rail. Very calmly, now, with the air of a priestess, she unwrapped from the folds of the mantilla a package of thin-pressed letters; a dozen, maybe, some of them partly torn, where she had run through them in her hurry.

One by one she tore them, bit by bit, and let the pieces flutter away from her hand and back out over the water; the while he stood watching, fascinated, unquestioning.

The half, perhaps, of them had gone, when thought came leaping back into his mind: She had not told him: She would not tell him anything of the meaning of this. This morning he would have said

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that she was right: The secret was hers to keep. Now it was different. Everything was changed by that one look that he had seen on her face. Before all and in the face of all, she was his; she must be his: And this thing must not stand unspoken between them.

Gently he caught and held her moving arm.

"Tell me, girlie," he half whispered; "wouldn't it be easier now?" He seemed to make it inevitable that she should some time tell him.

At the words she rose to her full height and faced him as if to crush him in her queenly, imperious sway. Instead, looking into her face, he saw again that melting of unutterable, tender loneliness, and of girlish purity and grace; and he heard her voice from far—far, saying:

"And you! You do not believe!"

Dropping his hand he took the remainder of the packet, murmuring to her hand:

"Let me believe, ever. What you do, that is mine to do also."

And as they turned back to the rail, it was his hand that tore the other letters, while they, arm in arm again watched them flutter away into the dark.

When all were gone they stood so, for much time, unspeaking, looking back over the water, where the burden had been left.

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VI

WHEN the girl had gently stolen away, Weldon still stood there where she had left him. Unwilling to break the spell of her presence with him, he remained, turning over the memories which the last two or three hours had woven between them. Only once in the long time that they had stood there at the rail, their arms intertwined over it, had they spoken: That only as she was leaving.

There had been not the least need for speech. Their thoughts and consciousness had flowed in lines circling the round of their whole lives and coming back to wind themselves about the boy and girl standing there. If either had spoken, though, there would have been so much to be said, so many things to be crossed, that they might have come truly to each other, that the boy, remembering the appeal in the girl's eyes, dared not move to say them or to cross any of those things. It was good to leave her a little time: It was the least of common kindness to give her the darkness and the kindly silence in which to come back to her brave, own self.

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As she moved, however, to put her two hands in one of his, to say her good-night and the fullness of all the things which she did say in the gesture of those two hands, he remembered something that must be said:

"Remember, little girl," he said, "if anything should happen from this to-night, you do not know anything of it all. I did it alone. You'll remember, won't you?"

"While I live—I will not forget," she had whispered, as she slipped away.

Now not one question came to his mind as to the letters. Who had written them: What they had contained: How they came to be in that man's possession: What this girl could possibly have to do with them, or with the man: Why it should be so cruelly necessary, as it must have been, that she should see them destroyed: Not one of these things found any place in his mind. She had appealed to him to believe purely on the ground of her beautiful, pure self. She had not argued nor tried to advance excuses. She had put herself, as it were, into the pledge. He must believe in the rightness of the thing, even as he must believe in the truth and grace and sweetness of herself. And he must take all, what she was and what she did, purely

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on the truth that he had seen in those eyes of her. If he had not been able to have seen that truth, then she would have gone on her way alone. It was as though she would not have or use the ordinary means by which one would persuade another of truth, but rather that she chose to reveal her very self, to the one who would prove himself able to read the revelation. And he blessed again the halty old shadow of the watch, as it passed again swinging the lantern. Blessed it for the vision that it had given him of the girl's face in that moment, and for the wisdom of trust and silence that it had given him in deeper and more critical moments since.

Now there came to him the thought that tomorrow, early in the morning, they would be in Havana: And that would be the end. He did not like to face the looks of the thing.

Yet, after all, it could not be altogether so bad as that. Surely there would be some way of getting to know her on some more conventional basis than that of being partners in the robbing of a gentleman's state-room. He was able to jest with the very tragedy of the thing. Of course, there must be some way of getting introductions. From whom? And he began to place around in his mind the people who would do for this.

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It all came crowding back upon him with the vengeance of a forgotten retribution. That day in the park, when he had been down, down almost to the bottom of things: When there was not one in his world to whom he could have gone. When he was but two removes—and those not very definite ones—from the thing of failure and rags and hunched shoulders that he had seen over there on the other bench. And why had he not fallen as low down as the other? Purely the brute looks of his neck and shoulders had separated him in the mind of Canfry from the other. And it was because Canfry had happened to pass that way, looking for bull necks and heavy shoulders, that he, Weldon, was not to-day slithering along the streets of New York, looking for something that he would have no hope of finding.

And it seemed that it was this ape of fate and creature of tomfoolery, as he stood off and looked himself over, that had been thinking love of this queenly girl: More, he would have been making love to her, in so many words, would have been giving himself to her: Would have been actually asking her, this pearl of all women whom he had known, to give herself to him, this scare-crow of the gods!

Her friends would be at the dock—he sup-

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posed that there would be a dock, though it turned out that there was no such thing—and maybe she would want to introduce him. Then at that moment Canfry, very likely, would whistle at him to get in line and go along with the crowd. There was no knowing what sort of reception might be in store for them when they set foot on the wharf, if the bad element of the town should know that they were coming; which they probably did know.

That would be somewhat embarrassing for her. But then, again, if she cared for more of his heroics, she might be driving some day through the city and might see him standing on the front end of a trolley car with the overgrown cross-bar that Canfry had mentioned protecting the little motorman, while the joyful populace threw bricks—or whatever the Cuban substitute for them was—at him. It was really laughable. But he did not laugh: Rather, he jeered and sneered at the drawing of himself. Then, when the bitterness of that had passed, he had the grace to thank whatever was responsible, for that he had been silent, and at least had not mocked her with any spoken words of love.

He straightened himself and started down towards the after deck. As he passed the room of Guiterez, the light was still burning.

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He had been sure that he heard the girl turn out the light. But now he remembered—what had not seemed of any importance before—that he had heard the button click twice, as she turned it off; which would mean that she had turned it off and then on again, and had not noticed it in her strain. The grate of the little port of the room was unhooked—it would not have been possible for any person to have entered the room in that way. The curtain was blown back by the breeze, and he could get a fair view of nearly everything inside. Might it not be well to see if the girl in her haste had dropped something which would in some way connect her with it?

Keeping out of the shaft of light, and looking in from the angles of each side, there did not seem to be anything: But, just as he was moving away, he saw, directly beneath the window, lying right beside the heavy bag that had been ripped open on the side, a little pearl-handled knife with its largest blade open. She had left that. Reaching his arm and shoulder in through the window, he could just reach it. Drawing back he closed the blade and slipped the knife into his pocket, saying to himself that so much, at least, was finished.

Passing on back around the after cabin on a turn of the boat before he should go to bed,

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he saw Guiterez at the same table where they two had seen him hours before. He seemed to be betting as loudly as before, and certainly knew nothing of his loss.

Weldon was on deck very early in the morning. Even before the crowd of others had begun to jostle and worry about the ship, fussing about pieces of baggage and wondering when they would go into the harbor and how they would come through the struggle with the customs officers, he who had nothing in the world to carry except his clothes, which he wore, and a tooth-brush and comb, which latter things he held as links between himself and respectability, was musing out there in a deck chair; not at all caring whether they should go into the harbor that day or the next, and thinking no fear of customs officers. He was lolling back drinking in the breath and the beauty of America's most glorious antique, the city, from the sea, in the sunrise. From the stained building away at the right, which some one said was San Lazaro, the House of the Lepers, around the half circle of the sea wall to the little Point, across the narrow slit of the harbor entrance and up to the height of Morro on the left swept the lines of the gray-gold beauty of the city. The squared, regular blocks, stuccoed back against the reaching hills, gave the feeling of age untold, as though

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the world had begun with it in just this way: While the blue tints of sky and setting, purpling down against green and gray and gold, showed a city new born out of the glory of the meeting of the day and the night.

Some remnant of the habit contracted on his trips to Europe made him reach to his upper vest pocket. The sketching pencil was there, he had happened not to lose it. The blank back sheet of a picture from a derelict magazine which he found within reach of his hand made paper that would serve.

The vague pearly lines were perhaps not easy to catch, or it may have been that some other vision persisted in coming between his eye and the paper, for, under the broken lines of a half-finished sketch, there began to grow, in lines that were almost caresses as it came nearer to fullness, a face that seemed to steal out of his unconscious mind and whisper back to him from the paper.

It was nearly finished. It was finished, as he looked: He would not add another line to it: He would not dare. Then he thought it time to give the picture its title, and in fantastic letters of the oldest script he knew he traced the name, "My Mantilla Girl."

"Have you, then, so many that you need to catalogue them?"

He did not need to look around to see whose

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was that voice. She must have stolen along behind his chair—or maybe he had been very deeply absorbed—and certainly she had looked over his shoulder.

"Eh? Good morning. Take this chair won't you and let me bring another. I've been here admiring the sunrise for hours."

His diplomacy to hide the matter of the picture was so elaborately clumsy that she laughed outright. When he had brought the other chair he could not think of anything to carry on his evasion, so he had to sit down quietly and wait for her to take the ball, as the old simile came to him.

"But the girls, you know? I was wondering which number in the list you would have to give to your mantilla girl. I suppose you have also a sun-bonnet girl, and a picture-hat girl, and any number of bare-head girls? Do you make pictures of them all?"

He did not seem, however, to be greatly disturbed by what she was saying. In fact, one would have said that he was not listening. Plainly he was giving more attention to the speaker, herself, than to what she was saying. She was radiantly, gently beautiful as her color mingled with the lavender mist of the morning, he remarked—to himself.

Then he did remember that some kind of

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answer was expected of him. He met the issue squarely:

"My dear young lady," he patronized didactically, "you forget the meaning of the pronoun 'my': It is personal; it is possessive—" he thought she was beginning to flush a little, but he went on, in the face of the fates—"it does not admit of any divisions. Now you must see that it is entirely possible that there are other mantilla girls. It might even be admitted that there are others that are—divinely beautiful,"—his rashness led him on, for she seemed to be losing interest in the inquiry—"but there is but one 'my' mantilla girl. That, you will understand, is the meaning of the mystic script."

He had not meant to say such things. When they came out to him in cold sound they seemed utterly bold and impudent. But the madness of the morning—which is by many measures the worst of all madness—was upon him.

"See, the pilot is coming out," she passed skilfully over the place as she caught sight of the skimming boat darting out of the slit of the harbor's mouth. "They will take us right in now, and we will be able to land early."

"You are eager to land?" he accepted her lead, willing, also, to let the conversation come down to safer levels.

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She did not reply immediately, but half rising in her chair, she looked long and sweepingly upon the morning beauty of sea and land and of the hills beyond; then softly, deeply she breathed:

"It is mine. My country. Home!"

There were love and tenderness and the beauty of a child's reverence in tone and in her eyes as she looked. Also, there was the peace of the child that comes wearied, tired, almost to the death, back to its own and to rest and protection.

Weldon left her the beauty of it all, and the silence; for he was glad only to see that the yearning appeal of sadness, of a burden too large, had gone from her face. She had passed through much in these last few days, much that had made an older and a stronger woman of her; but the weight and the wearing of it all were gone now and in their place, her face, bathed in the glory of the new day, was of the beauty of the children of the morning.

"And you?" she turned to him. "You are not glad to land?"

"If all voyages were to be like this one to me, I would not wish them to end, ever." Then he dropped the tone on the instant. It had been wrong—a false note, for he had meant to keep himself in hand, by holding well

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to the thoughts of last night when he had looked himself over and had seen that he had no right, by any possible argument, to say anything of that kind to this girl. Certainly he was not going to be the cad to feel that because he had helped her, as any man would have done—Canfry would have done the same thing, and better, probably, and would have gone about his business and forgotten about it—that because he had done this he had, therefore, any warrant to mock her with his fantastic love talk.

"No," he corrected himself, and caught up the right tone, "I really do not expect any great pleasure out of my stay here. I think I ought to tell you—though there is, of course, no reason why you would care to know—why I am coming down here. It may help you to understand some things that you may be puzbled over."

"Come over to the rail, please, and tell me there. I am selfish. I do not wish to miss a minute of this which I love: The dear creepy feel of the old bay, the houses shifting past us, like in a moving picture, and the smelly kind of sense that it all gives me every time I come into the harbor.

"Tell me now," she commanded, when they had settled themselves at the rail.

"Oh, it isn't much of a story. You'll hardly

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be interested, only, as I say, it will do to make things plainer."

It was not, as he said, much of a story. He pared it down to merest of outlines, throwing here and there an explanation, or a terse, illuminating comment out of his own thought, by which she could see the thing from his point of view—which was not at all complimentary to himself—or could take her own look at the whole.

When he came to the point of going to his uncle, she, interrupting, held that he should have gone with the absolute truth. But she did not, at the same time, need to be told that it was out of the question, just one of the things that a fellow knew he ought to do, but which no fellow *would* do.

"So, if you see me," he wound it up lightly, "acting the part of the great big brother to one of your little motormen down here, you will know why. And, too, you will understand the things that I have not said to you."

She did understand, even better than he had thought she might: for she dared to put her hand upon his arm, and for the moment they two stood together, alone as if nothing else was in the world, nearer to each other than they had been, even in the testing moments of the night before.

He made no effort to take her hand, con-

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tent in the fullness of her understanding. Again, in that daring in which a good woman unconsciously braves the mad spirit of life and comes away, herself, unscathed, she came closer to him, so that the mantilla floated down over his arm and her head brushed, ever so lightly, and just touched his shoulder.

Looking down, he saw in her quickly dropped eyes—what he had begged to be let see, yet which he had armed himself not to see.

Then it was, that he clutched hard at the rail, and steadied up to what was for him the man's part: Made all the harder by the fact that it seemed to rebuke her.

The moment passed quickly, for she, looking down the bay among the dozens of nondescript and disreputable craft that were coming out to the now anchoring boat, saw a white and gold launch flitting its way through them all, hurrying, spitting, up towards the other side of the ship, where the steps were already being let down to the water.

"See, they are coming for me." But even in her gladness of recognizing her own, he could sense the trace of a regret: Just the tinge of an unspoken something, and then he was properly ashamed of himself for having looked for it.

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"Come to the other side, then," he said, "and I will see to your baggage."

Together they passed into the interior of the ship, through one of the middle passages. It was deserted, everybody was out at the rail, and the light was dim. In the mid-way she stopped, remembering something.

"The picture," she said, "didn't you promise to give it to me?"

She had not asked for it, but he started back dutifully for it. He would have cared very much to have kept it, but he had nearly broken, when she had stopped there in the half light, the promise that he had put upon his manhood. Frankly, he had been glad to run when she had sent him.

The magazine was there where he had dropped it. That part was easy enough: Now he had to get himself in hand to go back to her with it. As he came back to her, he, too, remembered something: And reaching down into his pocket he found the little knife that she had left in Guiterez' room.

He thought that he was getting over the place lightly, when he handed her the magazine, saying:

"It's in this, the picture; and here's something else that—I found. If you wouldn't care, though, I'd like to keep it."

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When she recognized the little white handle in his hand, and it flashed upon her, where she had left it, and that he had gone back at risk to himself, watching and caring for her and guarding her, the tears sprang to her eyes —he could see them glisten in the dimness— tears that had been held back through many days of trial. She reached for his hand, as though she would take the knife. Instead, she grasped his fingers and folded them around the knife.

And he, in that moment, threw away and forgot everything that he had been holding to: Exultingly forgot everything except that they two were there, alone from all the world. Swiftly, hungrily he drew her swaying into the circle of his arms and kissed her gently, and held her reverently, tenderly for a moment. Then she, recovering, quietly drew herself away and went out into the light on the other side of the boat. He remained there, the little knife still folded in his fingers, the magazine on the floor, where it had slipped unnoticed. She had forgotten it.

He left it there until he should come back, and went out soberly, to look up her baggage.

When they had shaken hands, conventionally enough, at the boat's edge, she went tripping down the lengths of swinging steps, and he saw her lifted aboard the launch and into

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the arms of a tall, grey-haired, soldierly-looking man—her father, he could feel—and they were borne swiftly away towards the other side of the bay.

Once, only, he saw the old gentleman look quickly back up at him, as if she must have told him something, and removed his hat in a courtly bow. It was as though in acknowledgment of a debt. And, too, he saw a mantilla which he had come to know fairly well, and which must have been quickly removed, wave gently back in the breeze towards him.

Happening to look along the rail, he saw a face that he had almost let slip out of his mind. He had meant to watch Guiterez carefully, that there might be no chance of his doing or saying anything in the way of a suspicion as to what had occurred during the night. There had been no need, it seemed; for the man's face was that of one who had played and who had lost much. But it was not that of one who had any thought of recovering his loss.

"Say, Pr'fessor, d'you think you're hired on this trip to chaperonny an' salaam to the dons an' senoritas? Come down, if you do, an' get your baggage together."

"Baggage? All I've got is a magazine." And he dashed into the passage to get it.

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When he came out with it, Canfry was ready again.

"Where's your thirty dollars?"

"My thirty dollars? They don't exist yet. They haven't been made."

"Well, you better go quick and order them, for you can't get into this dinky little empire short of thirty dollars in your pants. So here you are. It's your first wages, the first honest money you ever had, an' *it's* mainly graft. You haven't earned a cent of it. But you will soon, Cub. So you'll be an honest man, thanks to your gran'father here. Hop along with the crowd, an' git your magazine through the custom-house."

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VII

AT four o'clock on the morning after their arrival, Bob was aroused from the floor where he had been fighting the heat and an army of other things—there was a bed in the room for him, but after a short inspection of it he had preferred the floor. Canfry was shaking him by the shoulder:

"Come on, what you doin' here? Think you came down here to play the Mañana game? Git out an' protect your little brother."

"What's the matter with you? It's pitch dark."

"Git an arc light for yourself, then, if you're afraid of the dark. Come on, fall into your clothes. Half o' you fellers's got to git out now and take the cars till five in the afternoon."

Having slept in his clothes, Weldon had no very elaborate toilet to delay him, so when he had stumbled down the stone steps and found a faucet of running water in the *patio* of the alleged hotel in which they were put up, he took his wash and made his way into the restaurant of the place, where murderous-looking

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coffee was being served with canned milk and long hard crusts of bread.

Long Tom Harvey, a big, rangy man with one eye, was discoursing, between gulps of boiling coffee, on the nature of the Cuban as a fighter, and upon the habits and disposition of the "Spiggidy" in general:

"Fight? Them fellers? Not on your life! They can't fight, an' knows it, not your kind o' fightin'. Look at 'em: Look at their necks: Look at their bodies—no give to 'em. Would they come up on the car to you? Would they get in reach? Are they fools, d'ye think? Not by your uncle's grey hat! But throw stones! Wait till you see 'em! Their crooked little wings is made just for that purpose. They c'n t'row a cobble straight as a die, and you'd never see them wink an eye, to tell you where it come from. That's them. Throwin' stones: That's where they live!"

The coffee was soon bolted away, the older ones among them taking all the time possible, and waiting until the very last moment, while those who were new and a trifle nervous, were champing out on the street.

They were all marshalled down into Calle Monserrate, to where another line of cars crossed it, making a point where nearly every car in the city must pass at some time of its run.

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The strike as Weldon had learned from Canfry had been in effect for many weeks, completely tying up the traffic of the city. The strikers had stood together well and had conducted an orderly and what would probably have been a successful strike. But after some time a part of them had become disaffected with the management of it, and had tried to go back to work. The usual conflict, accompanied by desultory rioting and street fights, had resulted between the forces of order and those elements which so often bring the cause of Labor into disrepute. It was entirely similar to what would have been the result of such a situation in any city of the North, with the exception of the fact that it was complicated in this case by the action of the carriage drivers of the city.

These latter have been for a hundred years the largest body of working men in the city. The cheapness of the fares in their carriages, together with the convenience of the vehicles, in contra-distinction to the poor routing of the cars, have kept them still much more important in number and influence here than in almost any other large city of the western continent. These *cocheros,* being gentlemen of perception, were not slow to see that the continuance of the street car strike was directly in their interest. Being, likewise, men of action,

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they hired the hoodlums and the ready mischief-makers of the city to shout and to fight with those of the street car men who were still obdurate in the strike; not because they cared to see the strikers win but because they, themselves, were gaining largely by the situation.

The breaking of the strike was, therefore, not so much a matter of filling the places of the striking workmen, for those were already filled: Rather it was a question of getting men fearless enough to stay on the front of a car and run it through the crowds of toughs and hired stone-throwers, who in every narrow street threatened the life of the operator.

There had been no attempt to run cars for several days, pending the arrival of the men from New York. The crowds, therefore, that had been watching every move of the officials and of cars through all the weeks of the strike had forgotten a little of their vigilance; and this morning, at the order, the cars stole quietly out from the barns and made their way over their regular routes. They were each to stop at the converging point in Monserrate, and there take on one of the Americans.

Everything was quiet and orderly so far, too ominously quiet, in fact: For you could see men stealing out to dark, ugly-looking alleyways and openings to see what was passing, and then hurrying back as though to arouse

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others within. From the open all-night cafés knots of men would slip out into the night, whispering instructions to each other, and then scurry off through dark, cavernous little streets. It was plain that nothing would be attempted until the crowds should have had full time to gather and form a plan of attack.

Harvey, the one-eyed man, stepped up to the platform of the first car as it came along. It seemed to be his right. Weldon was a little surprised when Canfry told him to mount the second: He was not at all sure as to whether it meant that it was a place of honor, or merely that Canfry thought he would be nervous and wanted to give him time to get used to the place before he should meet anything serious.

"Speak you Spanish, Señor?" This is the Latin-American's first remark, in peace or war. He does not put the question for information: He knows perfectly well that the whole world speaks Spanish. If, however, you should be so unfortunate as to have to answer that you do not, it does not disturb him in the least. He goes right on with whatever he has to say. If you do not speak you can at least understand. And if you do not understand Spanish, then it is because you can not understand anything. And his remarks are important, and should be given in any case.

Weldon was able to stumble it out that he

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did understand a little. That was enough to establish relations, and the little man, who from what Weldon could gather of his revelations of himself was the bearer of the name Manuel, broke into his tale.

"Figure yourself, Señor, what is to be done?" Evidently he was merely continuing an argument that he had been carrying on in his mind. "I have eleven children: Is it not that I must work to gain money?"

"It certainly is, old man: It's up to you to hustle." Bob was convinced that the man would understand college American as readily as his own lumbering Spanish, so he put the agreement into his voice. It seemed to serve admirably.

"And they throw the most vicious stones. I, myself, have received many in the back and on the top of my head from above, when I have sat on the ground of the car. It can be done in this manner, Señor, to sit and manage the car thus." Manuel illustrated his point by sitting flat on the platform, from which position he could just touch the brake-bar and the power lever.

"But you, Señor, you have no eleven. Why is it that you should come and receive stones?"

"Oh, I've got a big block of stock in the company: And I just came down to protect my own interests." As this, in English, did not

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seem to enlighten Manuel to any appreciable extent, Bob made shift to say in Spanish, that he had come purely for the adventure of the thing, seeming to imply that receiving stones was one of his cherished pastimes. If he had entertained any idea of impressing Manuel, it would seem to have been a mistake; for he accepted the explanation as entirely natural and within the range of his experience.

"Certainly, Señor, you are an American"—no more seemed necessary to make intelligible any sort of mad thing—"once I saw one American attack three policemen with his hands. He did not want to kill any of them either. Only he desired to knock their caps off. And he was not very drunk."

They were running carefully, keeping a watch for bad places in the tracks, which had been torn up by the mobs at various points, and guarding against any new breaks that might have been made.

A stone whizzed across the street, immediately in front of the car, at about the height of a tall man standing in the car. They had been running slowly, and the thrower had made too much allowance for the motion of the car. Otherwise the stone would certainly have come right into the little platform where they were.

"Not bad shooting for a nigger," Bob admitted whimsically.

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"They are devils, Señor," Manuel contributed, understanding the tone. "Devils born of the Mares of Potosí. My father was a soldier, Señor: But did he have to fight men that threw stones like so? By no manner whatever. Nevertheless I would wish that he were here, and that I were in Galicia."

"Leave your father out of it, old man, and play low. Here's a shower of stones coming this time."

Manuel did not need the warning—even if he could have understood it—to make him crouch down while the stones came, three almost simultaneously. One went wide, out in front. Another struck the roof of the car. But the third passed right through the place where they stood, a few inches from the back of Bob's neck. "They'd do for Harlem, some of those fellows. Get a move on. Touch her up a bit, Manuel. Go faster," he translated.

Manuel appeared to have been struck by the same idea—that there would be greater safety in speed, even if they did meet a piece of twisted rail. He turned on all the power and the little car bounded and jostled ahead crazily.

Down the hill, through the little park, past the city jail, and across the Prado out into the long straight stretch of San Lazaro, Manuel drove the car for his life. They were past the

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bad places now, for this part of the city was still sleeping. But Weldon saw that here in the narrow street, with its two tracks, there would be an excellent place for trouble.

The other car, the one on which Harvey was riding, took a switch and went off up a hill somewhere. Therefore he remembered that theirs was the first car that had been over this part of the route for some days at least. Since there were no more stones, it might be as well if Manuel would moderate a little the break-neck pace at which they were travelling. They were running close to the ocean, and a very little misplacement of a rail would easily throw them down to the coral rocks where the surf was beating up noisily.

"Hold in your team, friend Manuel: they're not coming after us. Slower—I guess that's the way you say it."

"By supposition, Señor. I have been sure for the last twenty minutes that one of us was born to be drowned. But I, I do not wish it: Neither to die by stones. Both are a hard death—especially in the night: Most certainly in the night."

The inspector at the car barns hugged Manuel rapturously for bringing through the first car that had come out for a week. He would have extended the same greeting to Weldon had not the latter dodged nimbly.

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He confided to them the valuable information that it was, however, but a small thing to bring the car out there. The real difficulty would be to get back through the city, when the crowds would be out looking for them.

On the return trip they were at the House of the Lepers without having encountered any hindrance whatever. It was a slimy-looking, creepy sort of building, seen in the near light, with none of the beauty or the lines of grace which it had possessed when he had looked at it from the bay at about this hour of the morning previous. Many things, indeed, seemed to be doing their part to destroy that first impression that he had gotten of the city.

A few blocks farther and they were down among the narrow streets again. Men were pouring out from the little side streets, all apparently crowding into the street ahead, which he could see in the distance filling up with humanity. Plainly they were preparing for a real blockade. Farther still there was a car making headway laboriously on the track which Manuel had used coming out. They must be having trouble, or surely he would have met others of the cars before this. He had seen no other car on the road since Harvey's had disappeared up around that hill.

Crash! Crash! The crackle of shattered glass, the banging of poorly thrown stones

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battering the sides of the car, the jabbering, shouting anger of the crowd as it thickened before him, the grim sense of his impotence as he had to stand there waiting to be knocked down and perhaps brained by a stone thrown by some weak-kneed runt out there, all roused him to a pitch of fighting madness.

If he could have jumped from the car and smashed into a half dozen of them and fought a road through them for the car it would have been nothing short of fun, he thought. He could imagine nothing more desirable in life than to have been loose among that crowd for a moment. Manuel, whose father had been a soldier but who, himself, made no pretense to valor, was by this time making the best of a bad situation, sitting on the floor and reaching up to the running handles.

It did not seem to lessen Weldon's anger when he reflected that after all Manuel was not paid to do anything more than to run the car, and that he, himself, was the one whose place it was to stand up there and face things.

"Get up, you small imp and take your part of the medicine. I can't protect you when you're down there in that shape." Manuel probably would not have obeyed, even if he could have heard the order through the din, or if he had understood a word of it. As it was, he merely cuddled down a little closer to

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the floor. Weldon taking him by the shoulders lifted him to his feet and held him up to his post with his hands on the levers.

"Stick up, old man! You'll never learn younger to be a soldier, let them take a pot at you, the niggers."

He was sorry within a very short moment that he had tried to instill bravery into the soul of Manuel, for hardly had the little man stood on his feet when he received a stone directly in the breast which sent him sinking to the floor of the car where he lay still.

Left on the platform of a moving car, without the slightest idea of the running of it, it did occur to him that he might try to stop the car now and get off and mess about with the heads of the crowd to his heart's content. But, no! It was a part of his business to see that this car went through to its destination, whether it had a motorman or no. He would run it, then.

Manuel had been running slowly, thereby making the danger much greater to themselves, in order to avoid running down any of the crowd. Bob, remembering the clockwise motion of the little bar by which Manuel had turned on the power, threw it way around as far as it would go. What if he *should* run down some dozen of them. He banged the bell hard with his foot, and the car bounded

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away into the crowd. Back to one side and another they jammed themselves. This was something new. This man actually tried to run them down. The aim of the stones was if anything more earnest now, but it was spoiled by the speed of the car and by the eagerness of the throwers.

Crack! Bang! Thud! They were coming faster and faster! Smash went the big reflector from the front of the car! One stone caught him on the fore-arm, not breaking anything, but leaving him sure of a painful bruise when he would have time to think of it. Another caught him in the ribs, where he had often been hit in baseball. That one did not matter so much. A third glanced off his shoulder, just past his ear. They were coming too near to his head to be entirely comfortable. Now he was out of the thickest of the crowd. He had a little space in which he could breathe. He was not giving any attention to the running of the car. Consequently it was dancing along with all the power of the whole system, for hardly any was being used along the lines. If it remained on the track, he would not ask for anything more. If anyone came in its way, there would be one less of that crowd.

The other car, which had been creeping along, was stopped now; about two hundred

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yards ahead. As Weldon ran nearer, he thought he saw the reason, for there in front of it, the crowd was tugging at something. Then he saw that they had taken up the rails before the car had come along.

Looking more sharply at what the crowd was doing, he saw them on the right-hand track, his own, tearing at the rails there also Now he understood their plan. It was to derail both cars at this point: Probably to run them together in collision and pile them up here.

As his car came bounding madly towards them the crowd fell away, giving him an opportunity to see the track. One rail had been pulled entirely out of its setting. The other one stood intact—the one on the outside. If he tried to run his car through, it seemed almost certain that it would slew over to the other side and collide with the standing car. He was running at a frightful speed, and if he struck the other car both would be piled up in a total wreck. He could jump and have a chance for safety himself, but Manuel would probably be killed—if he were not already dead, which, however, did not seem at all probable. Certainly, though, he would kill Chappie Baldwin whom he could now see on the front end of the other car, laying about him with a stout club as the crowd tried to drag

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him and the motorman down to the street. He reflected that Chappie, whose only interest in the profession which he had chosen lay in the number of fights which it afforded him, would be much put out if he were interrupted at his pastime.

On the other hand if he were to stop now, which he was not at all sure he could do, he would have to leave the car there and make his own way out through the crowd, leaving Manuel to their mercies. Moreover, he would have to fail, and go back to tell Canfry—if he got back alive—that he had failed and had left the car in the street.

He gave the power lever another push, to make sure that it was all on; threw off the brake which had been partly set by Manuel. The car leaped, and there was one swaying, breathless moment, when the crowd stood back to look at the madman who was driving to certain death for himself, when Chappie Baldwin paused in his work to see a flying car bearing down upon him, sure, as he thought to crash into the platform upon which he stood. Then came the ripping and tearing of wood and iron against each other, the desperate clinging to the dash in front as the car left the rail and bounced drunkenly along on the ties, the crashing and breaking of every bit of glass in the two cars, then the lilting

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swing that told that he had been right in his theory, and the car struck the second rail again, gripped it and slid smoothly on its way.

Weldon had known that he had just the barest chance of getting by on the theory which he had tried: Namely that the speed of the car would almost carry it in a straight line without the other rail and that if it should strike the other car in passing, the impact, instead of wrecking both cars, would throw his own back to the line which it must keep in order to catch the rails again.

They were past all the crowds now, the car still racing blindly. Weldon bethought him that he knew how to turn off some of the power and to handle the brake. The car on its own recognizance turned up Galliano and decorously ascended the slope of the city. To Weldon's surprise the route brought them directly up towards the place where he had passed the night. Manuel was by this time conscious, but refused to move from the floor of the car. He could not be persuaded that there were no more stones coming.

As they came up to the entrance of the hotel, Canfry came out and stood looking long and appraisingly at the car and at Weldon:

"What was it?" he questioned, as he peered judiciously out of one eye at the rakish-look-

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ing car: "An earthquake, or were you trying cross-country for it?"

"Cross-country, I guess it was," Bob answered.

"Come down, then, an' git your breakfast. An' let somebody else take that thing to the scrap-pile."

"I've promised to go back and help Chappie Baldwin out of his little affair." And he told them in what situation he had left the other.

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VIII

CHAPPIE BALDWIN was for once in the way of getting more fighting than even his rather heavy taste demanded. His motorman and conductor were both lying abject and howling, the one on the platform, the other within the car, wedged down secure between two seats. He himself, deeply indignant with the injustice of the stone-throwing, which he could not in any way answer, had retreated to the interior of the car whither he invited all to follow. Many did, to their grief. This stopped the showers of stones, for the numbers crowding in upon him from either end of the car were in as much danger from them as he. Here for three glorious minutes he laid about him in riotous content, ticking off the seconds on Spanish-American craniums with a rather anomalous-looking piece of wood which however still bore the traces of a "Spalding" mark. But the extreme bravery of those behind who were lifting and pushing the more forward ones up into the car through doors and windows was bound to tell in the end. He saw this and while it plainly gave more

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fury to his blows yet it seemed to interfere somewhat with the precision of them, for he was missing a head now at times and once or twice he struck the side of the car, from lack of real elbow room. That made him angry and he took to watching for the expression of each face, as it curled up under his blow, and scowling back at it, as though he had a personal quarrel with each of them. That also spoiled his aim and further ruffled his usually excellent temper. Then he began to wonder whether Canfry and the rest would come before the time when this squealing, tearing jumble of little men would be walking upon his face. He caught himself looking to see what sort of shoes they had. The look cost him the miss of a good blow, so he put the thought away and proceeded piously with his flail.

When Bob and Canfry, leading all the available men of the crowd and coming from the hotel through a byway much shorter than the car route, deployed out of Escobar on the run and took the mob in the flank the onslaught was too close for the use of stones.

The mob, though, seeing the small number of the assailants and that they were without weapons—Canfry had very definite orders on this point—thought to stand its ground about the car. But when it realized the real nature of the fighting, that these mad Ameri-

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canos were actually attacking with bare hands and knocking down whole rows of its own crowded ranks and trampling over these to get to other rows, it began to take fear. This manhandling was no proper death for a Cuban gentleman!

As the mob broke and gave way, some three or four score policemen who had for some time been lined about the edge of the crowd, apparently taking no professional interest in the scene, began of a sudden to club about and arrest their neighbors with exemplary zeal.

Bob, battering his way directly as he could towards the car, saw that there was fighting going on there still. Chappie was not down, then. But as he climbed in at one end of the car he saw Chappie lying in the aisle, very quiet. There was a clean gash across the bridge of his nose, and down across the full of his cheek cutting a queer angle with the drooped corner of his mouth, the nail marks clearly written, ran the track of a Cuban boot heel.

A very methodical-acting American with a frowsy shock of extremely red hair meandering down into his eyes was cleaning out the opposite end of the car, after the manner of an auctioneer. The Cubans seemed entirely willing to go when they saw the crowd outside melting away but the numbers made it slow

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work. When the last of them had been knocked head-foremost over the low back-rail of the car, the red-haired gentleman came back into the car to review things, and, seeing Bob holding Baldwin's head on his knee and opening his shirt at the neck, he remarked with a nod:

"The poor old skate, he's out."

"Yes, but there doesn't seem to be anything that would kill him," feeling about the head where the hair, crisp and coming to grey at the edges, was clotting from a dozen deep bruises.

"Oh, no, they was just takin' turns stampin' on his head when I got in. Here, try some o' this. It's poison, but maybe he'll be insulted enough at it to come to. I wouldn't blame him if he did." And the stranger produced a small flask of truly poisonous-looking Aguardiente.

The stuff evidently did have the desired effect, though whether through insult or strangulation was not plain, for when Bob had poured a little of it down his throat Baldwin choked feebly, quivered, and opened the one eye which was in a condition to be opened.

"But how did you come into this thing, you're not one of us?" Bob inquired when he had Baldwin safely propped up on the remains

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of a seat and the latter was able to hold the bottle for himself.

The other hooked back his shoulders and drawled in the second-hand slang which is the property of the Army from Washington Barracks to Mindanao:

"Oh, I jus' butted in when I saw they was gettin' the old hombre down. I was snoopin' around in the crowd an' clum over their backs through a window. I was too late, though. Them windows is too dang small anyway. He was doin' all right, too, only that little spiggidy with his face under the foot-rail must a got him by the knees. I thought I might as well stay then—an' clean up a little."

"You were certainly doing it nicely. If you happened to be looking for something to do I think our boss would be glad to have you."

"Strike breakin', eh, that's next thing to scabbin', ain't it?"

"Well, it meant that or walking the streets for me," Bob defended.

"Oh, that's all right. It's your own kit. Nobody's funeral but your own. But say, are you open for something else yourself?"

"I don't just see that I am; Canfry's been good to me," Bob argued partly to himself, "I certainly can't leave him until this thing is over, and I've got money—"

"You don't need to fret about that, I don't

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think. These little bandy-legged police can handle this if they want to, an' they will now, I guess."

"Well this thing is all right for a frolic, but as a permanent occupation a standing target for all the stones in Havana is not exactly the situation I would have asked for, if I had had the asking," Bob soliloquized.

"Can you run a dredge; d'y' know how to dump a mud scow?" The fellow did not seem to be much interested in Bob's casuistry.

"Well, I—I've been at an engineering school."

"That'll do. You're the feller the boss sent me after. Told me to pick up anything that looked as if it knew the difference between a winch an' a wrench. He don't know it himself, an' he's half spiggidy an' that's worse 'an hull, sometimes; but the pay's good, an' the work ain't nothin'."

"Gee! Chappie did sure beat the band up with his little baton!" Canfry had climbed into the car and was surveying the scene from the door.

"An' when they didn't murder me it's no fault o' yours, Tom Canfry." Baldwin was entirely responsible now, and able to talk from one side of his mouth. "Did you think I could hold off all the mongrels in the town for a week with that bit of a switch you gave me?"

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"We come hot foot the minute Weldon give us the word what was up."

"Weldon is it, the lunatic! that went by me like the Divil wint through Athlone, in stannin' leps. Did he never hear that cars was to run on tracks?"

"Well he got through, tracks or no tracks," said Canfry as he looked through the window at the ruts which Weldon had ploughed in the bare ties; "an' if he hadn't got through, we'd have been longer gittin' to you."

"I wasn't doin' bad annyhow 'till that blaggard there below bit me on the knee." This as an explanation from Baldwin.

"You have to thank this man," Bob spoke up, indicating the red-haired man, "that you're not worse used up than you are. He was here using your 'switch' when I got in."

"Ye came in time to save the remains. Tom Baldwin's thanks to ye, sorr, an'—" he remembered the amenities—"will ye drink first, sorr?"

The stranger gravely accepted the hospitality of his own bottle and when he had fulfilled the rite by swallowing a polite mouthful of the mixture he handed it back as gravely. Then Baldwin remembered the formalities:

"Before I drink with ye, sorr, will ye do me the favor iv your name?"

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"Sure. Billy Pearsall, Massachusetts, U. S. A."

" 'Tis a tight little state: I went through a strike in it once. 'Twas in Lawrence it was, but 'twas clane Irish we had to do with an' not this skimmins o' Bedlam. Ye mind it, Canfry?"

"That's all right, Chappie, but before you begin the tale o' your wanderin's let's git this car on the move—Gee, it looks like a peek-a-boo waist out of a job—an' move these near corpses somewhere."

One of the six or seven Cubans who had not been able to leave the car had by now crawled to a seat. While Canfry went out and rescued the motorman from the police into whose hands he had fallen, they picked up the others from postures of what appeared to have been sudden death. Baldwin lifted the one who had been the cause of his downfall, the while he admonished him almost tenderly: "Ye have good teeth, little mannie, but this is no work for ye; it's crackin' nuts ye ought to be with thim in a cage in Central park. There's where ye'd do."

The dilapidated car made its way slowly back toward the hotel, greeted along the route by nothing worse than the jeers and grins of the people. From there the wounded, all now

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in one or another stage of consciousness, were sent to the Merced hospital.

The town was entirely quiet, in reaction from the morning, and as the day grew older and hotter the cars began to move in almost their accustomed regularity. People even began to venture to ride in them, though the greater number of those who could at all afford it remained true to the *coches*. It began to seem that Pearsall might have been right in saying that the main violence of the strike was past and that the police could now handle the situation if they chose.

In spite of this appearance Bob did not welcome the idea of leaving Canfry so long as there was a possibility that he should be needed. He had come to like the hearty shrewdness of that product of the complex problems of civilization, and, too, he did not forget the bracing hand that Canfry had put on his shoulder that day in the park, nor the look of that other one with the drooping slouch who had sat upon the other bench and furnished the lesson.

Pearsall, however, was not to be denied. Bob was not asked to go out again for the day, Canfry evidently thinking that he had done enough for his first day of work. Pearsall refused to let him out of his sight, and when Bob had stretched himself out in what seemed to be the least suffocating place in the

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hotel *patio* with a cigar to help him moon away the afternoon and take some stock of himself, he came along and laying his great length out in generous sections over the cement floor, relieved himself:

"Well, I'm takin' the six o'clock train from the Regla ferry for Matanzas, and there's a seat in it for you and a good job ahead, eighty a month and your board. You better take a look at it."

"Matanzas?" Bob was sure he ought to know the name, but he had not before known whether it was in Cuba or Europe.

"Sure, yes. Nothin' wrong with the name?"

"Oh, no, it might as well be Caribo, for all I know about it. What's the work?"

"Harbor dredgin', mud bottoms and silt, no rock, dirty slobbery work, but you don't mind dirt down here—that is, clean dirt."

"Who's doing it, a Cuban company?"

"No, didn't I tell you, it's the Michael G. Weldon Company of New York. Say, what's the matter with you, an ant?" Bob had suddenly straightened up and gripped himself.

"Oh, nothing. Why, I didn't know that he —they did anything down here." He had known of it in a casual way, but the matter had not crossed his mind until that moment.

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"You know the company at home, I guess. You're New York from your talk."

"Yes, I think I've seen the Weldon barges in the harbor." He had himself well in hand by this time.

"Mike Weldon, sure, he's been down here since the Intervention, an' before, I guess. I was here then. Came down with the Twenty-seventh, an' we got left here. That was when Wood was bossin' the job. It was worse than the little scrap itself was. He had us scrapin' down yellow fever germs an' chasin' the festile mosquito from one end of the little island to the other. 'Twa'n't no loafin' job, not a bit. My time was up about the end of Ninety Nine, thought I'd cut it, soldierin' after mosquitoes was too hefty for me. I got my muster and had three months pay clean, and something for transportation. I was goin' home to father with money in my pants. Donno just where the break went bad, but I dropped it all somewhere, inside of two days, between here and San José wharf. I turned up over there in Central park the afternoon of the day before Christmas. Mike Weldon was sittin' over there on one of the benches—may be thinkin' of the Christmas dinner he wasn't goin' to get. So was I. I touched him for a quarter. Yes, I was down to it, an' you do it when you're

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down to it, no matter what you think you'd do."

He seemed inclined to stop, and Bob prompted:

"And did you get it?"

"Did I get it? Mike Weldon stood back up on his short hind legs and he looked me up and down like a time table"—Bob remembered the look—"and he put his hand heavy on my shoulder, and he says, 'Son, I don't know where you've been or what you've been through, nor I don't suppose you do, all, but I think you've had a bellyfull of it,' and he got me a feed and walked down with me himself to the Luz where they was unloadin' the parts of a dredge for him, and he says, 'git in there, lad, and take a brace,' and I got in and worked like a dog for him and I've done it ever since, and I'll do it as long as there is a stump under me."

Bob reached over quietly and put his hand into Pearsall's, saying:

"I guess I'll go to Matanzas with you to-night."

Canfry, on being approached, grumbled good-naturedly, but admitted that he did not really need all the men that he had. They compromised by his forcing Bob to retain half the thirty dollars which had been advanced, and he let Bob go with the final injunction to keep his shoulders "bucked-up" clean.

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IX

DON ELIGIO DE MERCADERES Y FUENTES had been born into this life with many possessions and prepossessions. He had retained a part of the former and all of the latter. Among those of the former which he had retained were, a good house in Havana, as was proper, and, in the Matanzas province, a plantation, somewhat mortgaged, as was again proper. First among the latter, of which he had retained all, should be numbered Corita upon whom he was wont to lavish the fine reverence and wealth of chivalry which he had never finished paying to her mother. His other prepossessions were, principally, an ever-fresh hatred of Americanos, which had come to him as a heritage from the period well before our Civil War, a pious and well cherished belief that he would live to salute once more the banner of Spain floating from the tower of El Moro—this the more stubbornly nourished in that he knew it to be impossible—and a sublime belief in the efficacy of the Spanish language for all the possibilities.

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Out of the deep boyish love which he bore the wife of his youth he had learned English, marking it as one of the sacrifices to be made for love, and he had learned it well; so well that through all the years of their life, almost from the days when he wooed her—the daughter of Irish exiles, in a valley of Old Spain—she had spoken to him always in her own English. But his sacrifice had halted at that. He had rarely or never brought himself to use a word of the speech. As a consequence their love and love-making which a life-time had not completed had been in the two tongues. He listening in gentleness to the barbarities of her English and answering in the roundabout elegance of his own Castilian.

There had been times when he feared that he did not understand the quiet-spoken ways of this woman so different from those of his own race. Worse than that, there had been times when he believed that she understood him, which in a Spanish woman would have been a state of affairs dangerously bordering on heresy. If this had been so, though, she had always very cleverly concealed it, in giving in as she had ever done to his vagaries. She had borne him no sons. That now would have been again unpardonable in a Spanish woman. But far from resenting it in her, he had taken

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it quite as a matter of course that she should have a way of her own about it. It did not at all appear that she had failed him in this.

She had left to him Corita, and, while a woman is after all only a woman, it did not seem that she had died leaving him without a real heir as another woman might have done. Sometimes it did not seem that she *was* dead. For here was Corita, plainly a Mercaderes, by the glory of dark eyes and the bewildering beauty of flowing black hair, yet carrying so much of her mother in the deep quiet of the lines of mouth and chin, so much of the uncounted strength of the spirit in the poise and motion of her body, so much of those things which had made *her* intangible and to be revered of him, that he found it hard to forget—and to remember. And when he caught himself calling her by dear dead names, he wondered a little, but was very content.

He was well convinced that there were times when he did not entirely understand Corita. And he was willing to look upon it as a sign of advancing age that he did not seem to resent it as he should do. It was harder to admit that Corita understood him. Plainly she did, by the way she wheedled him and met his arguments and was ready with her answer before he had his purpose formed. To Don Eligio there was something uncanny in a

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woman seeing through him so completely. Sometimes of a surety, he had suspected that her mother did the same, but she had kept it well within her reserve.

He had however at all times preserved to himself the fiction of proper dominance of all about him by arguing secretly that Corita's ruling of him extended only to the little things of which a woman might safely be granted some knowledge, but that it could never be allowed to come into the domain of his honor, where a gentleman properly existed. For instance, he had thought it not unbecoming that he should be guided to some extent by his wife, and by Corita since she had had the age of fifteen, in the matter of his property. And thereby he had retained many of his possessions. But he could not by any manner of means have brooked from them any interference in the matter, for example, of his treatment of a friend, or an enemy, or in the performance of the promise of his spoken word. These were things sacred to the masters of things.

Corita thought otherwise. She had recently gone through a terrifying experience to save him from one of the performances of his word. And while she told herself secretly sometimes that she did not regret the experience, yet she knew that he could not always hope to be

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so safely rescued from the consequences of his fulfillments of his word. Curled up on the arm of his great chair in which four generations of his fathers had sat and pronounced the law *Salique* to their womenfolk, she was remonstrating vigorously and dictating beyond all known bounds:

"Now you are going to answer to everything that you have given the word of a Spanish gentleman to these men, and that that is sufficient for all."

"Yes; My Little Pearl, what is there of other argument that could have such strength." He spoke his Spanish as he wrote his hand and walked his pace, by the very book; never stooping to the lazy, gliding idiom of the Cubans. She spoke either language, as it suited her. But for him she had always the English of her mother, and when she pleaded it was with the quiet voice of her mother and her mother's way of laying one hand and arm upon his shoulder while with the other hand she stroked down the unquiet grey forelock that marked his worry.

"But, Father, you have known and you do know so well that these men are not worthy of your word, that they are adventurers. They do not love Cuba, and they surely do not love your Spain."

"There it is, look you, when one argues with

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a woman. What have I to do with the making of the morals of these men? How does that import to me, when I have given my word? Shall my word not be my word, if it be given to a horse-thief?"

"It is your word, that is too true; but it is wrong for you to keep that word—please now let me go on—for it can only hurt our country, and can only bring ruin upon you and—"

"And does my daughter bring that to me as a reason that I should break my spoken word?"

"No. That is not a reason, and I would not be foolish enough to bring it to you for I know it would make you only the firmer."

"As it should, my little one," the old man commented piously.

"That is true, perhaps; but you do not think that I am afraid, even for you?"

"No, My Heart, you are not afraid, not even for me." And putting out his arm he held her very close, in memory of the last weeks, and of the long years.

"Then, why will you not listen and understand, dear?" she pleaded and managed. "It isn't that you do not know that Motilla is a rascal and that he only tries to stir up the negroes to a race war hoping to gain something in one way and another for himself. And have you not known the others to be traitors? Was it not they who in the revolu-

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tion were ready to sell themselves to one side or the other, and were they not on the point of selling themselves to Spain until the night of the destruction of the "Maine," when it was believed finally that the Americans would intervene? You will tell me that I do not remember anything of these things, but I do, for I have kept them and carried them and thought much of them. Why should you, on the strength of your word in a thoughtless moment, bind—"

"Eh? What is this, little baby, that you say, the word of a gentleman of Spain given in a light way, given in a moment lacking thought?" he translated.

She, out of the wisdom of long arguings with him, thought better than to follow him off into a disquisition on the ways in which the word of a gentleman of Spain might properly be given.

"But you," she argued from another side, "you are not a Cuban. You stood by loyal to Spain, while the Cubans were fighting to strike away from her. Why now are you willing to risk your life and your liberty and more than that, your good name—for it is that when you would join yourself with these bandits, Suarez and Quivedo?"

"You are but a woman, a most courageous, dear little one, to be sure," he conceded, "but

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still a woman and therefore not made to understand these things."

So far he seemed to keep himself well in hand, but now the leash of something long pent up seemed suddenly to break, and he sprang from his chair to pace the portál, declaiming:

"I am not a Cuban! It is left to my daughter to tell me that! And my fathers before me in these last two hundred years in which they were here on this very plantation, settling and making Christian and upbuilding the dear land, they were not Cubans, is it the supposition? Yet there they lie, in their dead ashes in the holy ground under the little chapel. Shall I call them up one by one from their casings and their wrappings and their dribblings of lime and ashes and make them answer one by one if they were Cubans?"

"Father, Father, now you do not think what you say!" She was frightened now at a mood in the like of which she had never before seen him. As she caught his arm, to plead again, he shook her off, almost roughly, and continued his tramp. Again he picked up his thought, this time in a wild half chant:

"And my own father, by faith, I had thought that he was a Cuban, when I stood me at his dying bed, and he swore me to be true to my word and to my king and to this land of ours. And when I closed his dead eyes and swore

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with my hands over them that I would be all those things, then surely I thought that I, too, was a Cuban. And when your loved mother danced with me, a bride, in the grand ball in the palace of our king in Madrid, and when we bent the knee in faith to the Governor General in place of the king in our own city of Havana, then, of truth I had thought that she and I were Cubans. And shall I see this dear land that is the resting place of that loved one of my life, shall I see it tramped over by these straight-backed soldiers of the sons of evil from the North? Shall I see a ponderous fat man from where it is a country of corn and pigs sitting in the palace of the Lieutenant of my king and smiling his smile at what he calls the vagaries of my people? Shall I see the real Cubans, children of the men who have been Cuba through centuries, shall I see these flouted and invited to stay at home, while negroes and half negroes and mountebank generals and *Sans Culotte* go arming each other up the stairs of the reverend palace to give counsel and have favor of this fat man? And shall not a thing be done in the way?"

"Papá dear," till now she had stood almost dazed by the suddenness and the passion of his outbreak, now she fell into step with him, to soothe if she might, "there is more that you do not let yourself think of. You have only

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to be quiet and let it be seen that the country is tranquil, and they will go home and will not trouble more. Then we shall have Cuba in peace."

"Cuba in peace! Cuba to be ruled by this rascality of politicians! Call you that peace, call you that living in tranquillity, that the men of Cuba should be living under the hell of this rout whose mothers were the slaves of our fathers! You saw me mortgage this very house of my fathers and take the field under the noble Captain General to prevent this very thing. And we would have done it or we would have hunted the very last of the rascals into the sea had the others not come from the North. Shall I not still fight and strike a blow against it? You see that if the country is disturbed at this time it will mean that the Americans will only stay the longer. But I see that, whatever may be the resultant of this little revolution, or another, or another, yet this will be true in whatever event, that we will make it impossible for this band of half black deviltry to ever govern us—that much can be secure. Then as for the Americans, we can pester and molest their rule, appealing at all times to the justice of God—and Europe, until Spain will one day come and take that which is her own. And we can then lay down our bones in peace."

The passing of his uplifting vision seemed

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to leave the old man weak, for he slowed and almost tottered in his walk, and sighed heavily as one who, in the very breath of his enthusiasm, knows the futility of his dream.

Corita, ready to humor and comfort him now, passed her arm gently about him, coming up near, to say:

"It is so, Papá dear, but it is long past your evening time, and I have tired you. Will you not come now to your room?"

He was ready to recognize her right in this matter, for she had ordered him to bed any night these two years. It was one of the things which fell properly to the sphere of woman.

When he had left her with a silent, tired kiss of "until the morning" upon her forehead, Corita came back to curl herself up in the greatness of the old chair and to quiet herself in the gentle cooling bath of the peace of the breathing tropic night. Away up from the sea, borne in the voices of the light-minded winds that wandered that way up the valley, came the dulled pulse-beats of the laboring waves as they were beating about the headland beyond Matanzas. The glory of the Southern stars, weaving their meshes of silver gauze over the ceiling of the dome of the night, shed down their gentleness through the vines of the portál,

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but their quiet could not come to her. The wondering fright which had come from her father's passion was upon her. And there was an embodiment of his argument, dozing over there in the light of the great door. Toribio, he was a case in point, crouched there in the door which he had guarded for fifty years; with the light from behind just sufficient to show the straight, black plasters of streaky hair, which were his heritage from the Chinese slave, his father. Hanging from his ears, the light showed the heavy brass rings, which had been worn by his African slave mother. He was the argument, itself.

It was by such as he that her father saw himself ruled in Cuba, as a republic. And the whole line of the traditions of her race within her revolted at the thought. And the alternative, American rule, such as was being given now during this Intervention. She had breadth enough of information to know that it would probably be better, physically and morally, for Cuba if American rule should be established definitely. But she knew that that would be even more bitter to her father than this other. She knew full well how pathetically foolish was the dream of her father, and of a few, a very few, others of his age, that the course of Cuba's destiny should ever be turned back in the direction of Spain.

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Now he had bound himself to two or three restless adventurers of the very worst type by a promise that he would assist in money and in the influence of his old name a mad project which they had on foot for an uprising under the very eyes of the American army. How utterly and childishly absurd such an attempt would be was plain to her, for her travel back and forth, her observation, and her study of the view of sane, strong men had taught her the terrible and clean efficiency of the straight-backed soldiers of the North.

There was nothing *now* in existence which would implicate her father, nothing binding him but his spoken word. Then she prayed to her mother for some of the wisdom by which *she* had guided and guarded him through a quixotic lifetime.

When quiet had in some measure come to her by her communion with the spirit that seemed never far from her life, she rose and touched the drowsy Toribio, for sign that he might now close the great door for the night.

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X

CORITA was awakened by what seemed to be the regular beating of horse's hoofs on the hard river road. The sharp *trip-a-trap, trip-a-trap* seemed to come out of her troubled dream—she had been crying in her sleep as she did not remember to have done since she was a little girl. As her mind cleared, though, she knew that the hoof-beats were real; that a horse, hard-driven, was coming up the rise of the hard, narrow road which followed the long slant of the river bed down to the bay at Matanzas. She had no way of knowing the time of night, but the strangeness of the visit—the horseman could be going nowhere but to their plantation—coupled with the lingering fright of her dream seemed to bring a portent of evil. Slipping out of bed, she slid her feet into the little *zapatillas* that stood always ready and finding a long, heavy morning robe wrapped herself closely in it, and sliding the bars of the iron frames of her window, she stepped out upon the *azotea* above the wide portál of the house. Looking over the low parapet that guarded the edge of the *azotea* she could see

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the horse and rider quite plainly by the light of the brilliant moon. Now she could hear the heavy breathing of the horse as he labored up the reach of the ascent. Now the two were coming straight at the steps of the portál, as though the man would ride right into the house. At the steps the man drew a sudden, heavy rein and as she strained over the parapet to get a sight of his features, a sharp turn of his head and a glint of the moonlight sickened her with the sight of the very face, repulsive, and cowardly, and houndish, that had distorted her dreams since those days and nights on the ship.

What could his coming mean? Was it that he had finally traced the theft of those letters to her and that he was coming now to attempt to recover them by threat or by force? She started to run toward her room, as though to get them and be sure that they were secure. Then it came back to her, where those letters were and who had thrown them away and what he had said: "Remember, if anything comes of it, that you know nothing about this, that I took them alone—do you understand," she quoted to herself. Yes, she had understood then, and she had understood every day better since that morning when she had left him looking over the rail.

Guiterez had dropped the reins hastily about

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the heavy post at the foot of the steps and was now at the door hammering guardedly on the big knocker. As she stepped back into her room and drew the bolts of the frame, Corita could hear Toribio coming grumbling from the cubby under the stairs where he slept, and asking questions through the door before he would open. She could not hear the answers coming from the outside, but evidently they were satisfying to Toribio, for she could hear him clicking the locks and then the voice of the other man in the hall.

He was asking that he might see Don Eligio on a matter of the greatest urgency. That much she could hear, while Toribio grunted through a running commentary on the indecency of a gentleman's house and a gentleman being disturbed at such an hour of the night. Finally she could hear him stumbling over things and lighting a lamp in her father's office. Evidently he seated the visitor there and went to call her father.

Don Eligio could not have been sleeping, nor even in bed. Probably he had been walking and smoking, as was his way on nights when sleep would not come. For he came immediately out of his room at Toribio's call. Corita could hear him following the old servant down the long corridor, while Toribio enlarged upon his protest at the unseemliness of

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the thing: *"Carramba!* He would not take no! He would have battered down the door! He would have put the house to fire! The Captain General, himself, would not have carried himself so at this door."

"Well, then! Well, then! We must see him, Toribio. Who is to say what brings men out in the night in such times as these."

Corita had by this time knotted the loose robe well around her and had come out to the landing of the stairway. She knew that by coming down a step or two she could hear and see nearly all that passed in the office, for the door of the office was only the usual one of the Cuban house, open in the upper part for the free passage of the air. Through the open part from her place on the stairs she could see Guiterez in the room, seated with his back to her. Her father had taken his own chair behind his desk, facing the other.

Guiterez, the rasping grate of his voice toned to an ingratiating nicety, was apologizing for his untimely call, and as he went on his next sentence made the girl grip the rail of the stair and stand clutching for control of herself, for he was saying:

"But it was precisely necessary, sir, for Suarez and Quivedo have advices of a boat coming over from the Keys on the night of the sixteenth. It will drop certain sealed cases of

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which you know at a point outside the harbor of Matanzas just where the light from the outside beacon comes in line with the tower of the church on the hill and it was of the first importance that you should be informed at once that you might make your preparations to receive them. Señor Suarez much regretted—"

The girl did not wait to hear more, but hurried quietly down the stairs, praying that he might go on talking until she could get into the room and prevent her father from answering in any way. She saw Guiterez' plan: To come as from Suarez and Quivedo, and by talking freely of things which he had learned about them to entrap her father into some admission of knowledge and connivance in their plans. He was playing a part, and that rather poorly, but she knew that her father in his simplicity would not be likely to think him other than he represented himself. She forgot her own danger. Forgot that his story might after all be only a ruse to come finally to the matter of the letters. As she came to the door of the office, Guiterez had stopped talking and was evidently waiting for her father to answer in some way. It seemed that the very force of her excitement must reach through the wall to the old man at his desk, for he waited with what must have been a word upon his lips. Then panic struck her, when she remembered

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that to denounce the man she must acknowledge the way by which she knew him, and admit the theft of the letters. The thought of them and of the man who had helped her then gave her courage for the need of the moment. She pushed in at the door, just in time to stop her father in the very act of speaking.

Coming quickly into the room, with a warning glance at her father, who was too surprised to frame any remonstrance at her unusual appearance, she turned quickly to Guiterez, who had risen, and extending her hand said:

"I am very much pleased to see you again, Señor Guiterez." Then with an intonation that her father could not misunderstand, she went on slowly and very clearly: "Señor Lamont told me that you belong to the secret detective force of the American governor. I suppose you are very busy in these days and that makes you be out so late. But surely you are not going to arrest anybody so late in—"

The expression on the man's face stopped her. But he was not looking at her. As she followed his gaze, she saw that her father had reached into his drawer for his pistol and was aiming it in the most matter-of-fact way at Guiterez' breast. In her frozen fear she stepped deliberately to one side. The very naturalness of her motion seemed to give the last touch to the man's fear. With one spring

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he was through the easy-swinging half doors, while the old man's bullet crashed through the glass panel of one of them, as it swung quickly back.

He was through the great door, which Toribio had left open, was on his horse and galloping down the drive into the road, as the old man reached the door, only in time to send another shot after his flying figure. It, too, must have missed, for the pace of the horse did not change.

A queer, grating, high laugh, that seemed to have in it something of a note of the lost, of despair turned gleeful, followed the shot. Corita, chilled with the horror of it upon her over-wrought nerves, did not dare turn to let herself be sure that it had come from her father. He crossed to her and gripped her viciously by the arm sending from the riot of his wildness shudders of unnamed fear through her body: The fear that had gripped her in the early evening and that had stalked nameless through her dreams.

He dragged her, unresisting, to the door and inside. There in the strong light she was forced to look, once—at his face!

He gave her no time to plead, or to soothe, or to manage, but broke out:

"Look you now how it is that the devils haunt me to follow me, to hound me! These

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fiends, these incarnate fiends, these swine of Americans! And it is my own daughter, the daughter of the generations of my house, that tells me that I must lie still and be harried in my hole by them! That I must be hunted in my house by them in the dead of night!"

On and on he raved. On and past the point where she had power to listen or to understand: Now he passed into the utter rant of madness, now he seemed to sway back near to reason, rising and falling in a sort of rythm and beat of paroxysm. Once she opened her eyes, and they fell upon the old servant in the corner, his yellow-black face livid, his nostrils flattened down till all look of a countenance was gone, his eyes protruding, white out to the very points of the long slits that held them. His shoulders swayed and his body writhed as though to the measure of some wild unheard tune out of the passion of the other, as though the rythm of her father's madness quickened some savage strain in him.

She closed her eyes again, and the chant swept on. The sensation of sickening, helpless numbness lifted a little now. Thought came back to her, in a degree. Of physical fear she had none: It did not occur. Only the blind, intangible fear of the things beyond reason seeped in through the chambers of her very soul.

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Now a thought seemed to come breaking in through the disorder of the old man's mind. The chant dropped and his words seemed to fix themselves definitely about some idea.

"But it shall not be so longer. This night it will end. Now, this night before the light comes. That much of it will end, that my daughter at least will not flout me, that she at least will not hunt with my enemies and the hounds that follow my race. Now, this moment. Toribio, bring the taper—and the keys."

Toribio, the moment that the chant had ceased, had come back to his stolidity. Now he hurried with the stumbling old slither of his *zapatillas* to his den under the stairs.

As he waited for the servant to return, Corita could feel her father's eyes staring, searching down upon her, compelling her to return the gaze. She raised her eyes, praying that she might see in his a little, if only the least little, of himself.

There was nothing, nothing but the fixed glare of the hunted thing turned now to a purpose. If she could have spoken she would not have dared, in the fear of hearing him break out again into madness. The numbing clutch in which he had held her arm through the whole scene was as nothing to the grip in which he now seemed to hold her eyes, the

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muscles and nerves of her whole body, the very tendrils of her being. For her life, or his, even, she could not have so much as twitched an eyelid. Feeling, motion, the very quick of life seemed to leave her body under the grim poring of those unseeing eyes!

Toribio, coming back, broke the spell. In one hand he carried an enormous taper, which was drawn out from a stock large enough to fill his hand up to a long, fine point of light. In the other he had on a ring four or five long-shanked keys which Corita was sure she had never before seen. What keys could they be?

"March yourself: Lead." Don Eligio gave the command, and when Corita saw that the old servant waited for no further directions but started with a definite purpose toward the unused portion of the house the conviction came to her that there was something unspoken between the two: Something impending through which they two had passed together before.

Toribio leading with the light, they following, her father still gripping her arm, they passed through the musty corridors between the rows of great, racked rooms where forgotten generations of Mercaderes had lived and disported themselves and died. The black open spaces above the half doors scowled down, grim and threatening. Here and there

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a blotch of moonlight, ghastly against the yellow candle light, fell from a crevice in the old masonry. A cloud of *langostas* coming from nowhere swarmed about the light for an instant and went whirring away into the dark. A rat ran across her foot, but she was not conscious of it. They seemed to be moving toward the chapel. That gave some comfort, maybe there would be some help there. But as Toribio came now to the door of the chapel he turned to the right, into a little passage that ran directly along the front wall of the chapel and led out toward what had formerly been the quarters of the slaves. Through it in the old days they had marched in pairs to their mass in the gray of the morning and to their prayers in the evening. Toribio stopped and fumbling with his keys opened a little, heavily-built door that seemed to stand where the side wall of the chapel would begin. Corita had often noticed this door, but never having seen it open, nor ever having heard that it led anywhere had always presumed that it merely covered some little, unused closet or cubby in the wall. She was surprised, then, when Toribio, swinging open the door, marched boldly into the opening and seemed to disappear with the light. She was yet more surprised when her father, still holding her right arm, pushed her in through the little door, and followed her

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without a word. Toribio, ahead, was marching along a passage barely the width of his heavy shoulders, the whitened dust of what must have been years and years showing his single footsteps as plainly as if it were snow in which he walked.

She was sure that they were passing along the outside wall of the chapel, yet there was nothing but the open *patio* outside of this wall. If this affair were real, then they must be walking in the open air. Now she was sure that it was a bad dream and that Manuela, her old nurse, would soon hear her crying as she always did and would come and awaken her. Once she struck her head sharply against the outside wall. The thin dust sifted down into her loose hair and her face, choking and blinding her. She heard her father stumble a little. The quick physical fright brought back the realities, and the solution came at once. They were actually walking through the wall of the chapel, through a passage hollowed out of the solid masonry.

Toribio went down five or six little steps, and, as they followed, her mind, working clearly now, told her that this was to get below the level of the one large window which lighted that side of the chapel. Coming up the steps on the incline beyond the window, she was careful to count them. They were six, she

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was sure of the six. But she could not stop counting then. She must go on counting and counting. Then the cord broke. Toribio was no longer real. He was a great fay making gigantic leaps back and forth along the passage, as the light swayed with the swing of his steps. Her father was a gray, rattling skeleton, clacking along behind her covered only by a long green chasuble such as the priest sometimes wore. She could feel the bones of his fingers rubbing cold against the very bone of her arm.

She was running now to keep up with the queer leaps of the one in front and to escape the thing at her back. She could not seem to accomplish any great speed, but they came somehow to the turn at the corner of the chapel and she knew that they were under the tower.

She remembered that someone had stolen the ball off this tower, and she laughed. The harsh, flattened sound of her own laughter coming back to her through the reaches of the passage threw at her the memory of that other laugh which had announced this nightmare. Fear came to her and with it strange, fleeing remembrances of things in the law of heredity. But reason, too, came, and clear memory, and she dug the nails into the flesh of her free hand, and bit deep crevices into her lips, for mastery.

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Now they were passing around the curved end wall of the chapel, back of the altar and under the great picture of the Virgin Immaculate which formed the altar piece. At the farther turn Toribio was lost and the terrible blackness fell in folds about them. When she came to the turning her father seemed to hold her back slightly, and, groping with her forward foot, she found the edge of a step. The stairway was narrower than even the passage had been. Still her father relaxed nothing of his grip, but held her arm behind as she brushed around the tiny passage, venturing weakly every step down.

The darkness, the silent padding of their feet upon the carpet of the dust, the terrible loneliness and grimness of it all made her think to turn back and struggle with her father. But the very unreason of the whole affair seemed to make it inevitable, and her feet went down, step by step, and around the turnings of the stair, as though there could be no possibility of question. She could not count these steps nor think of them, even afterwards, except as unnumbered, with horror marked at each one.

At the end they stepped out into the freedom of a comparatively wide arch, at the end of which Toribio was standing with his light.

From the best bearing that she could gather

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—the windings of the stairs had almost entirely taken away her sense of direction—she thought that this must lead across under the chapel, beneath the altar. Before they came up to the light Toribio had turned and was leading the way up another arch. This was wider than the cross way and ran, as she thought, the full length of the chapel above.

Queer, blocked arrangements, like compartments, seemed to make up the walls of this arch, though she could make out nothing clearly, with the light just showing over Toribio's shoulder and throwing its glare back into her eyes. Even before she remembered, the chill sense of the place hinted its nature and the young warmth of her blood revolted. Then memory told her that she was walking between rows and tiers of her dead fathers and mothers. Only for a thin marble slab, she could put out her hand and touch a crumbled skull, she might mistake in the dark and put her hand into the mouth of one of them, if the jaw had fallen. Now the fright of it brought back the question as to what her father's idea could be. She had hardly thought of this in any definite way since they had started.

She had never before been in this, the *sala de los cuerpos,* but she recognized it from certain descriptions of it with which Manuela had regaled her years before. On the day

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when her mother had been carried down into it, she had been too frightened and could not be persuaded to follow the coffin down. The entrance to it had, of course, been sealed by order of the Americans in their fury of sanitation. This had been one of her father's most terrible greivances against them, that they had dared to put the very seal of their possession on the bones of his fathers.

Toribio stopped now in the middle of the arch, and when they came up to him, Corita saw that they stood at the middle point of the cross in the form of which the place was laid out. The two arms stretched away to either side, the head in front, while the foot, as a man lies on his bier in the church, his feet to the altar, lay away longer in the direction from which they had come.

As they stopped, her father released his hold upon her arm. She did not know this from any sensation in the arm itself, that was long gone. She merely felt it drop loosely against her side. Without a word her father stepped behind her, and taking her by the two hands pushed her forward a step or two nearer to the light so that she was entirely out of the cross passage and standing between two tiers of vaults. Then he lifted her arms from her sides, and stretched them, cross-form, until her hands, palms outward, touched a slab on

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either side. On the slab on the left she could read by the candle the name, Don Sergio de Mercaderes y Ceballes, her father's father. Some instinct must have told her that on the other she would see written, Doña Maria Corita Dunleaven Mercaderes, for even before she looked to that side she tried to pull her hand away from what seemed a desecration. But the hand lacked both power and feeling, and her father was holding it relentlessly. Now for the first time since they had left the hall of the house he spoke—his voice low and tense, yet reverent, as in the opening of a rite:

"So for a thousand years have the Mercaderes sworn their oaths and given their faith to one another and to their country and to their house. Thus the son has laid his hand upon the body-stone of his father, and daughter has made her vow upon the ashes of her mother. Thus have weaklings and cowards, ay, traitors, even, for there have been such, been weeded out of the house. None has broken his oath and lived long, thus has the house been freed.

"Just in such manner did your grandfather swear, with his hand at the head of his father, when he went forth to kill the traducer of his house, a Duke of Spain. After such a manner, too, did your uncle, Sergio, swear with his hand here where is yours now when he went

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out to prove, this many years ago, himself not a coward. And he died with a bullet in his back. In like manner did my uncle swear there below on the altar of his father, swear that he was true to Spain, and straight out from there he went to die like a dog in a nest of rebels. So again was the house cleared."

On he went through generations and generations of his house, recounting their oaths as each went forth to war or to trial or sudden death, with now and then the name of a coward or a traitor slipping through his lips with a hiss. It was not so humanly insane as it had been in the hall. It was rather uncanny and weird, with the surroundings, his voice vibrating with the sureness of his purpose. Then she had been dazed and stupid with the human horror of unreason. Now she was alert, every nerve alive for the struggle which she felt was coming.

Gradually his voice rose now, sweeping back and forth from name to name. Now it was a chant of victory, and as it rose the echo came back from the length of the arch gathering as it came, wandering back from among the piles of marble, sounds of dusty, dead and gone triumph from the dead, mournful and piteous, almost, in the irony of the response. Again his voice sank low to tell the fate of some traitor, and from the tombs came answering,

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reverberating groans real enough to be of terror to terror-laden nerves.

Once again she looked at Toribio, but it was too awful. He had placed the candle in a socket and was down on the floor, writhing, whether in superstitious fear or in answering madness to the chant. She could not see his face, for, just where he had fallen, the side of the lowest compartment had fallen away, and in his contortions his head had worked into the opening.

Now her father dropped her arms, and in the weakness coming with the relief, she staggered against the side where her mother lay. Snatching the candle from its socket he laid it in against the marble so that the flame fell into the groove of the cross deeply chiseled in the face of the stone above the name of Don Sergio. The light followed the line of the cross up to the center, and there broke into three tongues to the three points of the cross. Slowly the old man drew his right hand near to the flame, carefully giving out each word of his oath:

"By the three tongues of the flame in the cross I swear to keep my word to those to whom it has been given, be they faithful or unfaithful, true or untrue, by the bones of my father resting here within and witnessing I swear to give every harass and molestation in

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my power to these Americans, by land and by sea, by fire and by sword. Let the three points of this light as it burns into my flesh be the three points of swords for their necks, three tongues of flame for their power. And if I be not true to these things in the word and the jot, let the three points be of the swords of dishonorable assassins for my throat and three tongues of remorse and shame and misery for me when these bones of my father within shall rise to curse me!"

Corita had stood weak and speechless, looking helplessly on, but as he had come near the end the flame curling up in its three tongues, one between his extended fingers, the other two at either side of his hand, had brought the odor of burning flesh as it ate into his hand. Then she had dared to try to pull his hand away. The old man had held his hand steady and firm, apparently not noticing. But when he had entirely finished, he turned upon her in fury:

"Is it a daughter of mine, and of the sainted one who sleeps here, who turns coward now to see the cross of flame leaving its mark on her father's hand"—he showed the mark where the flame had crawled in the three lines of blackened flesh across his hand—"is it thus?

"Then how shall she take the vow of her own kind? Answer me. How?"

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But he did not wait for answer. Grasping her right hand, lifeless as it still was, he placed the candle in the groove of the cross over her mother's name, while he brought her hand up close to the flame as he formed the oath she was to repeat.

She seemed to be able to bring nothing to her mind, neither thought nor argument with herself, nor even any desire to escape the physical pain. She seemed to remember only that it was a desecration of the gentle memory of her mother. But there at her very face was the face of the father, wild, pitiable, the face of one hunted to the end! She could not, for all that she held dear, bring one more line of horror into that face. And the gentle mother in Heaven would understand.

"That I will neither give them"—he was going on—"comfort nor shelter nor a smile nor a tear, and that by this cross in the tomb of my mother and in the flame and in my hand I will not look with love upon one among them.

"Swear you now as my daughter to these things?" He held her hand flat over the flame. The searing of the fire came shooting up through the numb hand and arm, but even as she was forming the words she felt his hand relax, and looking quickly saw that the light was gone from his eyes. She caught the can-

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dle from his hand and tried to support him, but he fell heavily down by the side of her mother's tomb. Her scream brought Toribio, and he in silence picked up his unconscious master. She leading with the light, Toribio carrying her father, they passed down the foot of the cross, up the steps and through the passage and the corridor as they had come, to her father's room.

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XI

SLEEP, the blessed sleep that seemed to tell of saneness, followed out of the coma into which Don Eligio had fallen. As she watched by his bedside in the long hour before the dawn, Corita heard again the pounding of a horse hard driven up the river road.

Hardly three hours had passed since she had heard the sound of the other, yet surely she had lived the fullness of a lifetime between the sounds. It seemed that the night was being drawn out to cover the reaches and the turnings of an eternity. Again there came the pounding upon the door and the clamor of Toribio from within. Fearful lest it should wake her father, she stole into the hall to tell Toribio to open at once. He was already drawing the bolts, and as the door swung open a man with a nervous, yet bravely swaggering gait stepped inside. By a queer streak of extremely yellow pock marks, extending down one side only of his face, she recognized him, Miguel Suarez. He had been pointed out to her as one of the leaders of the August revolution of a year ago.

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"You are the Señor Suarez? You have business with my father, no?" She hurried to forestall him, as though he must not be allowed to speak his message. "He cannot be seen, for he has to-night suffered a dangerous attack of—of heart trouble, and he is barely conscious."

The man, evidently puzzled and put out by her quick recognition of himself and her seeming preparedness for his coming, halted in his attempt to speak, but finally managed to say:

"But it is about the man who was here a few hours ago. He was Guiterez, a detective."

"Yes. My father knew while he was here."

"But how, Señorita, how could he? Not one of us knew until to-night, or your father would have been warned in time."

"I knew the man. There is reason, then, that my father should be warned of detectives?" she went on coldly.

"Every man needs to know well his visitors in these days, Señorita." His tone was sententious, but there was that in it which showed that he was sure that his meaning was understood. "You, how could you know?" He puzzled as though to himself. "The man has been for years in South America, and it is only within a month that he has been employed with the Americans.

"But there is another part of my business

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which I almost forgot in my haste to be of warning. It is imperative, it is precise that I should see your father at once. There is information which he must have."

"I have already told you that my father is not in a condition to be seen or to receive information. Your business must wait."

"There is no time to wait. Your father must know, that he may make preparation; and I must be in Santa Clara to-night."

"You will be obliged to give me the information and trust me to deliver it to him correctly."

"That would indeed be to me an honor, but you are not of the plan. It could not be confided to you, and a woman." He added the ancient insult as matter-of-course afterthought, without the smallest notion of offense.

"I am my father's daughter," she parried, "and there are no things which do not lie between us. There is no way in which you can have your news reach him but through me. If you do not tell me, then he will not hear it. If you do tell me, I shall—do what is best."

He nodded, in recognition of the strength of her position, and proceeded:

"It is thus then, there is no way but to tell you. Guiterez came here pretending to have information about certain things to be brought across from the Keys on the night of the six-

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teenth. No? He had learned what was the truth at that time. The boat was to come over at that time, and your father was to be prepared to meet it and take charge of the things which it would drop. But you have knowledge of all this. No?"

"That need not matter," she answered as he evidently waited for some admission, "I have it now."

"The truth, Señorita, it does not matter whether you knew before since you know now."

"What is your message, then? I must go back to my father, lest he wake and need me."

"So then, the news has come to us that the boat will come on the night of the fifteenth, and that it will keep the hour and the point agreed. There is more danger now, as you will see. But that will not prevent your father."

"On the contrary," she said.

"True, true, Señorita. Still there is more need that he will be watchful."

"I will engage that. He will be more watchful. And I will engage, too, that he will better understand the nature of the enterprises in which he gives his name in the future." There was no need now for the restraint under which she had held herself while wishing to obtain his information.

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"You who make it your business to destroy and ravish your country; is it not enough that you lead boys and ignorant negroes to their destruction, to brigandry and arson and murder, but you must try to bring the name of an honored old man into the mire of your doings? Hear this: If another attempt is made to bring my father into any of your schemes, I, myself, will go to the Governor with your names and your acts as I know them. Guiterez will not be needed."

"And bring your father to prison for conspiracy? And yourself, too, perhaps," he sneered.

Then she remembered that this was foolish, and turning, said:

"Toribio, the door."

Suarez had not expected such a termination for the interview. There were many things, after the manner of the Latin politician, that he would have said: Besides, he had hoped to draw some information on his own account from this daughter of Don Eligio. Toribio, however, advancing upon him, convinced him that it was time to go.

Kneeling, half lying, on the edge of her father's couch, her head taking a little corner of his pillow, she had time to arrange this new thing with all the others that had gone before. She could not say, she could make no promises

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to herself as to what she should do with this information when her father should awake. When he should awake! Then she knew that everything in the world depended on when he should awake, or whether he should awake at all, really.

As he slept on and she knelt, vividly awake to the trouble of his breathing, the dawn came ambling in. With it came Manuela exploding:

"Ave Maria! What a house is this, that I should be sleeping like an ancient pig at her door, while my Niñita is about the whole night in her bed dress! Is there no custom, that young—!"

"Hush yourself, Manuelita. Papá sleeps. He is ill."

"Ill then!" She tempered her voice but merely turned her argument the more swiftly. "Ill then! He will have the fever of his fat fathers. I have seen it in two of them, it comes of a turn of the head. He talked yesterday of sending the old witch, Conchita, away to the jail. She has ridden him with the nine colts of the mare, I can see it in his face."

"Please, Manuelita," the girl prayed weakly, "please stop it. He is really very ill."

"Ill, to be sure, very ill. And therefore am I, who have nursed him and his father, Don Sergio, before him, left to snore while you

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take my place. A switch, a very willow like you to be nursing! *Ay de mi!* such times. Go now to your bed little one. Go. Take yourself. Yes, I will surely call when he stirs, only go."

And Corita, knowing the real skill of the old woman, dragged herself up the stairs and fell exhausted upon her bed.

The mid-day sun, beating fiercely into the room—she had forgotten to close the shutters in the night—awakened her. She could not understand why she should have slept so late. Then slowly one thing after another seemed to free itself out of the night.

To her infinite surprise, her father was slowly pacing the hall as she came down. Evidently he was waiting for her to join him at breakfast. Before she came near him for the morning kiss, she had time to gather herself and be ready to ask the usual morning question for his health in the right tone.

His answer, ignoring everything of the night, was that he was as always. Manuela domineered the breakfast room as ever. Only she, of the three, seemed to admit, by her silence that there had been something beyond the usual.

Through all that day Corita walked, and rode a little over the plantation, and talked with her father. No one came near the place.

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They were as close as they had been in all the days since her childhood, yet never by even a look was there a hint between them of what must have been on the mind of each. Surely he must have been aware of at least a part of it, and as for Corita, it was never a moment away from her thought.

The next day it was the same. But now it was the morning of the fifteenth and she must decide at once whether or no she should tell him of Suarez' message. She could wait until the morning and then tell him, when it would be too late. He would be angered and hurt by the deception, and—she could not look at it beyond that. Then, too, she thought as only a Spanish-bred woman would think, did he not after all have a right to his own conduct. More tangible, though, than either of these was the argument that came out of her own shrewdness and knowledge of him. Perhaps if he could really go through with this one affair, and come out of it free from danger and suspicion, he would feel that he had kept his word to those to whom he had pledged it, and he would maybe be satisfied.

If she could persuade him to take only herself and Toribio and they should be able to carry it through, then all might be well. Trembling at what might be the result, she

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told him of Suarez' coming and of the change of plan.

He accepted it without remark, except that he was pleased that he would be able to carry out his word.

The other matter was more difficult, that she herself should be allowed to go. But when she had pleaded long and drawn from him the admission that the things to be obtained were of no great bulk, he did not seem to be able to resist longer, finally agreeing that they three should go.

It did not seem to be at all out of keeping that she should be aiding him to keep the oath at which she had so strongly revolted. Neither was she surprised that she herself was even eager to take a part in a thing that was so plainly wrong. The one thing by which she was really puzzled was her father's apathy and apparent lack of interest in the matter. He seemed to have lost all his personal view of it, and was plainly ready to go on with it only because he had given his word to others.

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XII

ON the train going down to Matanzas, Weldon had told Pearsall that his name was Robert Gordon, using a name that had been common to several generations of Weldons. Gilbert Torriente, the manager of the Weldon work in Matanzas, accepted that name the next morning without comment. Pearsall had classed this man as "Half spiggidy," and had seemed to intimate a rather moderate degree of admiration for him.

After less than two minutes' conversation, Bob was inclined to put it more strongly. He did not like him at all. To begin with, he was not a typical Cuban, and while Bob had not acquired any great affection for the type, still he was inclined to resent this man's breaking away. It seemed to be an irritant from the beginning. He was of that rare Spanish outcropping which shows somewhere a strain of the Lombard running through the woof of the darker main pattern of the race. His hair was coal black and stiffly straight, but his beard, standing a day or two, was of a dirty

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yellowish red. It gave his face the look of most shiftless unfinish. Weldon could not imagine how Michael Weldon, who dealt much in men's faces, would have picked this man for his work. Later he learned that his wonder had been well founded, for Michael Weldon had never seen the man until he had already been employing him for some months. He had accepted him on the word of a business associate, at a time when another had failed and when he could not personally come to Havana to make a selection. When he had finally seen him, he had felt the same dissatisfaction with the fellow's face that had irritated Bob. But capable engineers who will keep themselves responsible in the tropics are not so easily come at. Torriente therefore had remained in charge.

Bob found that he was not after all the sort of man that Pearsall had been sent out to find. He did not know the difference between a winch and a wrench, in practice. The setting of the swing of the dredge, the laying together of the lines of forces and weights, the striking of grades under water, things which a week or two ago, in class, had looked so elementary, began here under the test to seem beyond the range of any mathematics that he had ever learned. To his chagrin, also, Pearsall could get the proper angles for the set of the dredge

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and even find levels under water more surely and accurately by his eye and judgment than he himself could with the instruments. Archbold, the English engineer, whose work Torriente had given Bob when he found that he had had the technical training, had brought his work up to a point a week or two back in perfect clearness of outline and detail. From that point it was a muddle of crazy figures and uncertain lines. Which meant that Archbold had worked under a heavy fit of drinking for several days. In the end he had insisted upon putting sails on the dredge and navigating it up to Havana under its own head. He had left in disgust at Torriente's refusal to permit this, and had gone to Havana by more regular conveyance.

For hours of the first morning in the blinding glare of the sun, while the slopping from the great shovel fell and rose from the blistering steel deck of the barge in sizzling clouds of steam, Bob staggered through the mess of prints and figures. Torriente had come out leisurely in the course of the morning and had spent an hour or so poking about the dredge with the government inspector, whose business it was to tally, for the government as the contracting party, the yards of mud raised and carried out to sea. The manager came now and looked down steadily over Bob's

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shoulder for some minutes. It needed only that to make Bob break out:

"Why the blazes didn't you keep this fellow straight?" he roared as he threw the prints down in disgust. "You know the work."

"My friend, I hire a man to do that work. Just now I am hiring you for that, not to tell me my business."

"Well what—! Why, three men and a boy couldn't make any head or tail to that thing! That fellow must have been a fool."

"By no means. He was simply drunk."

"He certainly was. Here's the day of the twenty-ninth," picking up the paper again, "everything looks straight up to that. The next day he apparently started to dig a well in the bottom of the channel. The last thing I can read is that he was taking out five hundred yards a day at a level three feet, four inches above the water."

"What will you do, then?"

"Do? There's nothing to do but to go back to the twenty-ninth and sound it all out by hand from that point."

"Do it, then." And the manager turned on a high Cuban heel and went down over the side of the dredge to his little launch.

The knowledge that he had been in the wrong and that his outburst at the manager had been nothing short of impudence did not

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seem to help Bob's temper in the least. The breakfast, hot pig's feet, boiled rice, beans and hard bread with black coffee, was a further insult; until he discovered that he was hungry. Then he fell to, with his eyes shut.

He spent the afternoon staking out the channel without reference to the work done in the last two weeks. He took Archbold's prints along, though, to gather what amusement he could from the jokes contained in them. The *hombre* who rowed him over the scene of these operations furnished running commentary on the terrible conflicts that had occurred between Pearsall, working the dredge, and Archbold, when the latter had insisted on a fifty foot depth one day, and on the next had made them go through the motions of shoveling free air into the mud scows. Bob did not follow much of it but he understood enough to know that Pearsall had cursed most frightfully, and that Torriente had stood by and taken no part in the matter. Torriente was not easy to understand. His very English, which he spoke without fault but with that colorless lack of expression, which is the most maddening of all defects of tongue, was an abuse. He did not seem to have learned it from anybody who spoke it, neither from books, he seemed merely to wear it about him loosely.

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Now he was beginning to see, however, that the work would be easy enough for him. Once he had straightened this crazy piece of business—he would have to bring the dredge back over most of it—then it would be plain, simple work. The wages were not much, by the reckoning of engineers, but he could certainly save money here if he wished. Besides, it seemed that he was making some effort to do right toward his uncle by being here. He had time to realize that he had been utterly wrong and cowardly in leaving New York as he had done without any word to him. His aunt, too, who cared for him, would be really worried and hurt. He agreed that he had better; that he *would* write after a day or so.

He shared a room and a balcony with Pearsall in one of the low-roofed old stone houses that lined the curve of the bay. The men, with the cook in command, slept on the dredge. Holding forth that night on their balcony, dressed in a clean nightshirt apiece, and smoking pipes of decent American tobacco, gotten through the good offices of an American commissary sergeant, a former companion in arms of Pearsall, they took stock of things as the talk ran.

"What d'ye think o' Torriente?" Pearsall put tentatively.

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"Why, I don't know." Bob was ruminative. "I don't think I like him."

"What's the matter with him?"

"That's just it, I guess," Bob answered without much regard to conciseness. Then he explained. "That's just what I want to say. I can't seem to make anything out of him. There's nothing the matter with him, so far as I can see. But I can't get myself to remember that."

"Same here. I can argue myself black in the face that he's straight, an' prove it. An' then I'm mad because he ain't crooked."

"Did you ever see him mad," Bob questioned, "mad so that you knew he meant it?"

"Mad? Him? Naw, the's something left out in him. The thing where a man boils over an' hits out. He ain't got it."

"Yes, I guess that's part of it. He can't seem to be interested in you or me or anything else. He doesn't seem to care a rap for the work, yet he does it well enough."

"That's it again. He goes on with it like about as anybody would an' he certainly don't give a hurrah whether it gits ahead or not. The other day, when Archbold was makin' monkey out of the thing he stood 'round unconcerned as 'git out.' He sure is odd size, but you can let me put you on to this; if he's doin' anything crooked to Mike Weldon I'll

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git him good an' proper 'fore he gits away with it very far."

"Why, what can he do? Or rather, what is there in it for him to be crooked. He only has to check up his number of yards by the month and send it in to get his vouchers. That's the way, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, what can he do, then? He can't beat—Mister Weldon except by turning in a smaller number than he actually lifts. But he can't get money for those that he doesn't check in. He might be beating the government, if he had the inspector in with him, but he's probably straight, isn't he?"

"The inspector? He's a spiggidy." Pearsall's contempt was the contempt of the Army for the alien, loud-voiced and universal.

"But you haven't any reason to think it at all, have you?"

"Not a scrap. Think of it, two spiggidies like him an' that inspector on a job like this an' not tryin' to git away with a thing! Why it ain't natural. The's something creepy about it. They're goin' to die. Or else they're diggin' deep somewheres," he added after a moment's contemplation of the wonder.

Weldon was silent for a moment. The other yawned heavily and put the thing away from him:

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"You can sit here all night an' think it over, an' look at the old dredge out there. For me, hike's the word. Me for the bed."

He gathered himself down from the balcony and made straight for his bed.

Last night Bob had been glad to drop into bed and into a dead sleep the moment they had reached the room. To-night he was tired, too. Twelve hours' sweating under that glare of sun on the breathless bay take away the strength and freshness of action. But they do not always bring drowsiness in place. Mid-December as it was, the air was still tense with the heat of the long drought. Here on the balcony with a pipe to kill the smells coming up through the live stones of the old building, it was tolerable. Across the bay the hills, naked and gaunt in the sun's beating, showed full, beautiful lines under the gentler treatment of the moon. Away to the right the Yumuri valley gathered just a suggestion of mist with which to clothe itself in folds of half-revealed loveliness as it stretched itself up into the arms of the hills. The bay, unbroken in its breadth as the space of a quiet dream, breathed in a swell gentle as that in the breast of a tired babe. Outside, beyond the narrow, silvery roadway of the harbor mouth, a benighted steamer, arrived too late to make her berth, was lying steady on the broad breast of

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the ocean. As she lay, broadside, the full length of her rail showing to the land, a light moved swinging along the stretch of her deck. Unconsciously Bob breathed a kindness for the fellow out there stumping along with his lantern. For with the light there came to him the face of a girl, a face deep-lined with the beauty of the night but troubled and anxious to the point of written horror. It was not the first time that face had come to him during these days. It had never been far from his consciousness, even in the busiest times that his mind had gone through. Sometimes it was the pensive face that had drawn him as he had first seen it, wreathed in the dark cobweb of the mantilla, the soul fairly reaching through the pleading of the eyes for the Southland and the breath of home. Again it was the glorious, challenging face that had dared him that morning in the half darkness of the inner passage when she had sent him back for the magazine. Or it was the frightened, riotously exultant face that she had shown coming out of the state-room with the packet of letters in her hand. More often, though, nearly always, it was the terrified, revolted face, that one fleeting revelation, as the light had flashed across it, the one that had sealed his faith in her, and had given him the grace to be ready for her test.

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Into what niche of this hurly-burly that seemed to be Cuban life had she dropped? What kin had she with the fluttering fat women and over-dressed girls that seemed to make up the feminine of Havana, from the point of view that he had gotten? She lived in Havana, of course, everybody did. It was not at all within the range of likelihood that he would ever see her again. There was no reason why he should. He had merely helped a poor girl who was in trouble, and then, naturally, he had insisted on mooning over it and had talked foolishly to her. She had not thought to resent it because—well she was on the point of saying good-bye to him anyway, and of course she was perturbed, and grateful.

But he had kissed her, that remained after everything else. And she—she had allowed it. To be sure it was in payment of his kindness. It cancelled all. It closed the partnership, if you put it that way. But he did not like to think that she used that method usually in the payment of debts.

Another set of stars moved overhead in the glory of the night, while he filled innumerable pipes and smoked each to one thing or another of those that had passed so rapidly in the last few days. Now he was playing through those last few minutes of the game that had brought everything about. Now Nolan, heavy-headed

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old faithful, was grunting down the roof of the tower after the ball. He laughed again that choking laugh at the dramatics of the Vice-president, while the ball leered unsoberly out from under the bed. The hand of The Lady of the Station in its quiet kindness touched again. Canfry's hand, too, fell bracingly upon his shoulder. But through all that he was conscious of the girl, convinced beyond thought of question that all those things had been merely parts of an intention which was to bring him to her side in the hour of her need. How else could such a string of impossible things have been pieced together, but under the necessity of some compelling design. They had carried with them in their sweep his college career, his place at home, his friendships and the right foundations of his life. That was what it had cost him to come to her in that hour. And he reckoned the list cheerfully, with no thought of regret. Conscious that she had needed these things, that she was living somewhere under this same sky with him, and remembering. She was not of those who forget.

When the cool of the nearing dawn came stealing up from the bay it brought with it something that answered for sleepiness, and he went in to get rest for the day that came.

From that on the days slipped away without

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interest. The work was entirely easy, once he had his own bearings to rely upon. There was something about the progress of it, or better, about the spirit in which it progressed, that made it difficult for Bob to admit that it was Michael Weldon's work. It did not seem to carry the stamp of reality, the mark of things being done, that had always made his operations stand out from the works of other men of his kind. Torriente, over it all, seemed to give out a note not so much of carelessness as of mere uninterest. It went on regularly, and well, too, as far as could be seen, as Pearsall had said. But it had none of that heart and life of work, which is as necessary to the dredging of mud, in its way, as to the fighting of battles.

There was absolutely no reason, as Pearsall had almost complained, for thinking that Torriente was not carrying the work on to the best of his power. Bob saw, too, that there would be a natural dislike between the manager and Pearsall. Michael Weldon knew the latter, had tried him in many places, had used him on every piece of work that he had done in Cuba for years. When he had come to Matanzas for the one visit to the work since Torriente had been employed, he had gone of course to the manager for the figures, statistics. But he had looked to Pearsall for his

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real, man to man report of things. Torriente would certainly resent the fact that he was forced to employ a man who really stood nearer to his employer than he himself did. That and Pearsall's unhidden despisal of all spiggidies, in the lump, would be sufficient to place immediate enmity between the two. Torriente resented nothing, gave no apparent concern to anything. If Pearsall was unusually loud in his condemnation of "niggers," "greasers," "shines," or whatever name he chose to apply to all who were not white men, that is Americans, the manager lifted not an eyelid. If the work dragged or was stopped or went on rapidly, it was the same. He with the inspector went over it impassionately.

Bob found that he could not like the man. Probably he did not try. He had all of the open man's distrust of the other who never shows the real self that must lie under somewhere, who never hits back, who is never off his guard.

If Torriente's *hombre* noticed that the gasoline lasted very poorly in those days he at least made no comment on the matter. Bob fell into the habit of lounging down after dinner to the little punta where the manager's launch was tied up and slipping out in it for an evening of loafing about the bay. Pearsall had concerns of his own in a little club which

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he with two other civilians, of Army antecedents, and a half dozen sergeants supported in one room over a restaurant. They played cards, drank beer, and talked American politics and baseball, in season, and criticised the manners and morals of the Cuban race. Little Forsythe, a cub lieutenant of the Twenty-seventh infantry, three companies stationed at Matanzas, meeting Bob on the street one evening was willing to fraternize with him, even to stand sponsor for him at a forthcoming officers' hop. He did bring him one night to a late supper of a set of the younger officers. Bob remembered, the next morning, that he had done some remarkable things while there, and decided that neither his money nor his head would stand their company. The launch was a convenient alternative.

It was not that he cared so much for his work, that he should want to be poking around the scene of it at night. Neither did he draw any romance out of the apoplectic little boat and the moonlight. Probably he was just a little homesick, and the lull of the boat as he let it lie on the easy swell of the ocean outside the harbor was good for his infirmity. If it was rough outside, he puttered around the harbor. But when the sea was smooth it was good to head straight out of the harbor and point for the North star. He supposed that

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home lay in that direction. It did not, by several hundreds of miles, but the idea served the purpose. Five or six miles, may be, seemed to be enough, and then he would be ready to drift back slowly.

One night as he came in, later than usual, he noticed a light in Torriente's office which was on the ground floor of the building in which they roomed. Contrary to his custom, the manager must be working to-night, he thought. Weldon had forgotten his pipe on going out. He had not missed it much on the water, but now when it occurred to him that he had not smoked for some hours, he was suddenly hungry for a smoke. He filled the pipe and was stepping out to the balcony when he discovered that his pockets did not contain a match. Pearsall was still out, but an examination of his work clothes revealed the same destitution in them. The smoke now became a matter of utter necessity, to be had at all hazards. He thought of Torriente, and concluded that he was the nearest help.

Torriente's door stood partly open, the interior hidden by a light shutter screen the height of a man's head. As he came to the door, Bob was surprised to hear a low, rather heavy voice running on in a steady insistent discourse. His natural hesitation about entering changed to sudden interest when he heard

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a sentence that seemed to stand out of the flowing Spanish.

"Now we have to catch the contract," he translated stiffly, "we can make two dollars more for every one that Weldon is gaining. Here I am this night to put my supposition before you."

"I do not think that I understand just what you offer me." The manager's Spanish was easier of translation, being colorless as ever and without life.

"We are prepared to give you five thousand dollars on that day when the contract of Weldon is declared lost, equally the position with our work that you now have with that of him and with two times the salary."

"That is enough for money," Torriente conceded plainly. "But I do not see just how it can be done: Weldon would know by the certificates that he receives at the end of each month. It must fall below one thousand yards during two consecutive months in order that the contract be declared lost to him. When he would receive the first month's report showing that it had fallen for that month from five thousand to less than one, he would be down here on the instant and the whole plan would be revealed."

"But, man, it is clear, it could not be plainer, or easier. You have held back your report

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for the month which has just passed according to your promise?"

"Yes."

"Then, there is nothing of difficulty. It cannot well be held longer. It goes in to-morrow with your signature and the inspector's, showing that only some nine hundred of yards have been taken out for the month. That will be one of the months in which he has fallen below. To-morrow is the sixth. It will require two days for it to go through the Auditor's office, and in that manner he cannot, even if he starts at once, as he may, he cannot be here before the seventeenth. There will be nothing to show how much or how little you have taken out from now until that time—the inspector will lose his place in the investigation but he will be taken care of. If the dredge is disabled on the night before Michael Weldon can reach here in such a way that it cannot possibly be repaired within two weeks, then on the first of January the contract is ours, and the five thousand is yours. You understand?"

"Perfectly." Torriente displayed no more interest than if the man had talked of laying fish lines in the bay.

There was more of plan and argument, on the one hand and of Torriente's acceptance on the other. Allusions to names which he could

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not remember, quotations of figures which merely showed the size of the work, pleasantries, too, on the business-like nature of the compact between the two: But out of it all, as it ran rapidly, Bob could hardly make more than the bare outlines which he had heard in the beginning. Once the voice plainly offered Torriente help if he thought it would be needed—four or five dependable men. The manager's answer, though, was low and not clear, probably some Spanish slang or idiom which he had not learned. He could not make out whether that was agreed upon or not.

The talk seemed to be over now. Weldon thought it better to move quietly away. They might come out suddenly. Still he would like to get a sight of the man who owned that voice to which he had been listening. He stood stiffly in the shadow of one of the large pillars supporting the balcony over the front door of the building while the two came out and started up the street. The man hugging closely to the manager, so that the two could walk on the narrow sidewalk, was stout, carried a round, well-filled body in a black coat, wore heavy spectacles, walked stiffly. Evidently a respectable householder.

Coming back up to his room, he thought that he could wait until Pearsall should come

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in, for his smoke. Pearsall would have a match. His first impulse was to tell Pearsall at once what he had heard. His help would certainly be needed. A little reflection told him, too, that Pearsall was really the one to take command of this thing. He knew the ground. He had sense, and he had met things like this before. Also he was really nearer to Michael Weldon, in the matter of work, than he, himself, was—or ever would be, probably. However, there was no hurry. Nothing that either of them could do would change any part of the affair for the present. Then, it was a Weldon matter after all. He seemed to owe it to his father, and to Michael Weldon, too, to carry the thing through himself. That much was due to the name. He forgot the smoke until after he was in bed. He heard Pearsall come in very quietly, plainly trying not to disturb him. He was minded to ask him for the match, he could reach out to the pipe, ready filled on the chair, and have his smoke in bed. But he thought better of that, too.

In the days that followed he looked closely for any change in the actions of the manager, or in his apparent attitude toward the work. There was none. He was as attentive as ever, in the same drab way. The inspector was there, scrupulously checking up a record—it

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would be conveniently lost at the proper time —of every yard of mud moved. Pearsall grumbled and swore at nothing. The men wallowed on through the broil of the sun in the same lazy, compelled round.

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XIII

TWO nights before the day on which, according to the schedule that Torriente's midnight friend had mapped out for him, Michael Weldon might be expected in Matanzas, Bob slipped the manager's launch from her moorings and headed for the mouth of the harbor. He had often known his uncle to beat schedules which people had mapped out for him, and he wondered that they should have planned so narrow a margin for their work. He remarked to himself as he pushed off that if he had wanted to do anything to Michael Weldon he would want two days' start at least. He did not in the least fear that any attempt would be made to injure the dredge to-night (Torriente had certainly gone to the Centro Gallego, the club of the Galicians in a Cuban town). Everything was as usual on board. The men were all there sleeping. Perhaps it would be well to assure himself of this latter. He ran over as near as he cared with his borrowed launch. They were all grouped, a dozen or more, about a light in the open space of the deck between the

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foot of the derrick and the cabin. A big negro was dancing in the center, passing back and forth before the light swinging a tambourine thing, furnishing his own music. The manager certainly had no plans for any action tonight.

It would not do, however, to get too far away from an uncertain situation. It struck him to wonder sarcastically what he would do in any case. Suppose Torriente had hired the whole crew to set fire to the dredge. It would be an easy way, he was sure—until he remembered that a steel dredge does not easily burn. He knew that he should have told Pearsall before this time at any rate. He ought to go back and do it now. Instead, he headed for the open sea. The old ungrown impulse, to play with things that he would never learn were not to be played with, coaxed him to drive the boat out beyond the last point and straight at the miles of water ahead.

The moon in the first rim of its newness had gone down almost with the sun. The stars in their lambient glow from sky to sea lent themselves fully as well to the mood. The slight breeze, bearing just a touch of the life-giving stiffness of the north wind, for which the children of the North in their exile in the tropics come to hunger, was a willing accomplice. For hours, with full power on and the little

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wheel tied, standing in the prow, drinking the breath of home, he drove into the face of the wind. Then of a sudden looking back he saw the light of the outer point, a mere speck on the sea. What might be going on in the harbor, and he out here carousing in the wind!

The boat came about nicely and started importantly back, full of sputtering ejaculations. Apprehension made him crowd her to the very limit of her small power. Silently he abused himself and all the silly points in his character, making full list of them, while the light crept gradually up higher and higher off the bosom of the sea. As he came in nearer he noticed away to the left of the light, comparatively near in-shore, a boat—standing or making head he could not say. He was fully convinced that she was under pay of Torriente to slip into the harbor and sink the dredge with all on board. It did not occur to him that this would be a rather expensive as well as dangerous pastime for the manager. He was solely occupied with the matter of getting into the harbor sooner. She was plainly standing, he made out after another mile or so. She would not go into the harbor, of course. She would anchor out there and send in a small boat to do the work. Sure enough, as he looked toward the light again, there was the little boat, passing across the streak of light that lay

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along the water from the lantern to his eye. He had drifted, as he got his bearings from the shore points coming into relief now, much to the left of the light. The little boat would surely enter the harbor before him. His little engine chug-chugged scorn at the mere row boat ahead. But the distance between the two was too great for any hope of overtaking the other before it reached the entrance. Too, he had noticed while it was in the streak of light that the boat was not the Cuban tub of the harbor, but a clean, low-cut affair, looking like a skiff. It could be rowed very fast.

Looking across to the large boat, he saw now that she had put on steam and was heading out to sea with all possible speed, belching black smoke against the stars like a lake freighter. She carried not a single light, which he knew was no proper proceeding. He was himself breaking the law in this matter, and knew it. A flash caught the corner of his eye now. Coming up the coast, from away beyond where the dark boat had lain, another boat, flat-lying and swift, carrying a searchlight which she threw in long slashes across the water, was heading generally in the direction of the three. Now she picked him up with that staring, blinding eye, held him a full minute in the light; then dropped him, unsatisfied, to stab again over the face of the water.

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Now the light flared against the funnels and smoke and broad side of the large boat fuming away to the north. It stayed there while the newcomer changed her course and started in skimming pursuit of the other. From her make, so much as he could line out behind the light, she ought to be the cutter, "Grito de Baire," which he had seen going out of the harbor in the afternoon. It was an uncanny performance, this double contest in the dark; but his interest in the second race had not taken his hand from his own little wheel where he was driving so that he shipped water at every yard. He was gaining on the rowboat, but at a very large angle, for he had been forced to come up above the light to take the straight course into the harbor, the only one that he knew.

The flash fell on him again. The cutter had dropped the large boat which was now well out to sea, clear of Cuban water, and was taking another look about. Now she dropped him with an almost sensible jerk into darkness again—he had no connection with the large boat—he was coming from the sea. Another spearing twist or two across the water and she caught up the rowboat, and held it. Held it while she changed her course and fairly lifted herself out of the water in her eagerness. Like a clean-running hound, even at the distance, he

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could sense the very motion of her as she loped from swell to swell, could see the very play of her back as she took length by length. Now it was another kind of race. He laid it out by geometry. A right-angled triangle: Himself at the right angle: The cutter taking down the hypotenuse: The mouth of the harbor at the altitude, with the rowboat nearing it. It felt the light upon it. Across the water above the hammering of his own engine came the hum of the oar-locks as they hurried.

The end of the race was plain. The little boat would enter the harbor first. He would be second: The cutter could not overtake them now—if she had not lost time following the dark boat it would have been different. The light showed him the small boat fairly clear in the outline. The man at the oars he could make out. If there were others they sat low. It was long, and narrow, but deep too; deep enough to have a half-dozen men in the bottom, and the rower was powerful in a long, full-backed sweep. By this time he had forgotten why he had started to pursue this particular boat, neither did it matter why the other was pursuing it, they were all three merely part of the race, a race that had to be run. The light showed him no more as yet of the nature of the quarry, nothing more than that it was now making the turn into the har-

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bor, hugging the shore as closely as was safe with the run of the waves which always beat around the base of the punta.

He was thirty yards behind the little boat as he swung into the full light in the harbor entrance: Both now out of sight of the cutter coming up the coast. As he peered through the haze above the water a figure rose partly out of the stern of the boat—a woman's figure, which did not seem to fit entirely with the idea in which he had entered this race, as he remembered the entry now. There was a something, too, about the figure—a something out of dreams: A something in the turning of the head, as she plainly looked toward him, as though she had expected him. Something, too, there was, strangely familiar, drooping and billowing in a shaded line from head to shoulder. More was not given him to see: But it was enough to halt his heart in its racy beating—then to send it hammering above the pound of the engine. His boat fairly crawled while the oarsman kept steadily on. Surely his engine must have stopped. Now he was almost alongside. The oarsman shipped his oar on that side, while Weldon cut off the valve of his engine, then turning reached over and clung desperately to the gunwale of the other boat until the two slid along with the same speed. Then he could look up to see—

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the face that he had seen once in the flashing of a lantern.

A second look showed him, standing near her, the figure of an old man, which also he had seen before, swaying with the motion of the little boat, but holding a pistol pointed quite steadily into Weldon's eyes.

He has contended that he did not stutter, but turned to her and took up the conversation where he had once left it off:

"Isn't it something that I can help in?"

"It is you, then?" The answer came back, as across the edge of a dream space. "And my heart was not wrong?" For a moment she seemed unable to come to waking. Then, remembering fully, she went on, "Yes, you must take my father. Else he will sleep in prison."

She caught the old man's arm, which had fallen a trifle by this time, and fairly dragged him towards Weldon. He lifted him up and across the little rail, pistol in hand, and let him find a seat as he could by the little wheel.

The boats had slid a little apart, and he had to reach with a hook to bring the other up again.

"Come," he said, reaching out his hands to her.

"I—I cannot: I must go with the boat."

"Come," he commanded, this time.

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"But I must not: It is my father's business: He will be foresworn."

"Come." He caught her arm, grasped her strongly, almost viciously by the shoulders, lifted her, held her for the barest instant as he swung her over the rail, and placed her gently on the seat beside her father.

No sooner was she safe than the rower, pulling his shipped oar from the lock, pushed the two boats apart, and dropping the oar into place again rowed rapidly on in the line which he had held before.

The old man, aroused from his bewilderment at the turn of things, arose attempting to clamber over the rail as though to spring after the fleeing boat; at the same time shouting in Spanish:

"He is my faithful: He has fought by my side. He shall not be taken alone to die."

Weldon caught him lightly by the arms and turned him back into the seat, announcing fatuously:

"My dear sir, your servant will probably be hanged, but your daughter will *not*. Neither will you, for that matter." He knew that it was not a brilliant speech, but he could not remember the proper thing for such occasions. Reflecting consolingly that the old man very likely did not understand any English, he made a diversion of starting the engine, heading

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now toward the dredge; not that he remembered that there was such a thing as a dredge in the harbor—or in the world. His action was just the unconscious reflex of what had been on his mind. It served a purpose, though, for it took them out of the line of the little boat; thus disavowing any connection with it.

The flare of the cutter's light broke into the bay, passed over the dredge, picked up Weldon as he neared it, held him suspiciously for a space long enough to see that he was standing driving as before—his boat the same, the two sitting low and hidden by the shadow of the engine. Then it whipped the bay a moment until it caught the rower bending steadily, unconcernedly to his work. Standing with a thousand unframed questionings back of his lips, driving the boat with one rigid hand upon the wheel, toward the punta where she belonged—this, too, with no thought of boat or dock—Weldon, with the girl and her father, waited for the end of the race. Two hundred yards perhaps lay between the two now, the rower seeming to draw in a little to the farther shore. For a moment the cutter's eye left him, raking the shore line, for a place where he might try to land. The three straining into the sudden darkness of the place where he should be seemed to make out

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that he had stopped rowing. A wisp of mist must have intervened then, for they could make nothing farther until, after the space of a few untaken breaths, they saw a little tongue of flame show over the wale of the boat, as though he had kindled a small fire in the bottom. Him they could not see. The searchlight was wandering back now to——The water! The bay! The town fleered out into ghastly, horrid flame—Rocked and danced between heartbeats in the roar of one frightful explosion following another! Then the darkness gulped it all down, all but the distant echoes rolling away high into the hills.

The insistent chug-chugging of the engine came to Weldon through the dull deafness. One groan, the language of soul in torment, escaped the old man: The girl sobbed trembling against his shoulder.

The light from the cutter flashing ahead showed a white streak in one place on the water, an oar split clean from end to end, also what seemed to be the flat round head of a small keg. With her speed and direction unchanged she passed quietly over the place where the little boat had been. Then, seeming to remember that the race was ended, and that she had lost after all, she turned impatiently toward the town.

The town meanwhile was rushing out of

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doors and down to the punta. Already the steps of the little quay were crowded as Bob drove up to it with undiminished speed. It was Pearsall, standing on the lowest step, who shouted to him to reverse before he should dash the boat to pieces. He had no thought of the boat as he assisted the old man across the rail, nor as they two together half lifted the girl out of the boat and up the steps.

Torriente stood at the top of the stair questioning. Weldon, looking through him, was concerned only with finding a way through the press for the charges which the sea had given him. Finding an opening, he led them to the edge of the crowd where two or three *coches,* driven down here in the general rush, stood waiting. Into one of these he propelled the father. The old man, even now, had not a word. He had not accepted Weldon in any sense. He had merely seen him as one of the many things of the passing night. It is true, though, that he did lean a little perhaps more than was necessary on the arm that the younger man gave him going up into the carriage.

The girl now, in the full light of a near-by lamp, turned to him a face that set his heart to stand reverently, as though some holy thing rose to them, a face of utter, dear, confiding faith in him, and of peace. Again she spoke

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as out of the dream that seemed to lie over their two lives—

"Twice now," she murmured, "you have come when my heart has called. It seems that you will come once more, and then—" With a little gesture of abandon she gave him both her hands.

"And then," he prompted, bending low as he caught the hands.

"Then—I will be ready to repay."

"Then you will be ready—to repay," he repeated as though it were some sacred form in which he sealed each word in the repetition.

Very tenderly he lifted her up into the *coche*, feeling that thus he would wrap about her the arms of the world to keep from her dear life the things of horror that preyed.

He did not wait to watch where the carriage would go, nor think to listen to the direction given to the driver, but strode blindly up to his room: There to sit for hours, his pipe filled, the match unstruck in his hand.

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XIV

"WELL you're certainly a cool one, all right; takin' picnic parties out in Mike Weldon's launches to view the fireworks, an' then climbin' up here like an owl when the rest of the town is runnin' round mad. Say, what in blazes was it anyway? They've got it everything from the blowin' up of an American battleship to an earthquake under the sea. You was out there, you must ha' seen?"

"Eh? Oh, it's all right; it wasn't anything particular."

"What—! Wasn't it good enough for you? Didn't it suit? Maybe you got it up yourself for the lady, an' she didn't like it. Try another, why don't you?"

"Why,"—remembering that he had to say something—"it was an explosion."

"Some people were smart enough to guess that from the sound," Pearsall jibed back. "Come again."

"It looked to me as though a little rowboat blew up." Bob was virtuous in the absolute truth.

"That's worse yet. Um—m, a little row-

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boat: Did you ever happen to live any place where little rowboats had the habit o' blowing themselves up just for the fun o' the thing, did you, an' shakin' the country like a twenty thousand tonner goin' to swat? That'll do for rowboats: You'll tell the truth sometime. Now for your little party. Can you give us a bigger stiff about them? They was in the rowboat when it blew up, maybe; an' they came down out o' the sky into the launch that you had waitin' for them. Maybe you can do better 'an that: Don't mind me: Go right ahead: I'm used to it."

"Why, they—they were some friends that I met—accidentally, and took for a ride. But," he digressed shiftily, "if you're interested in explosions, you'll see another to-morrow night that may bother you more than that one."

"What the blazes! Do you keep things like that in your hat? Is it a continuous performance with you?"

"No, not that. I'm sorry, but the fact is I didn't have any hand in the one to-night. I ought to have told you, though, long ago, what Torriente has planned for to-morrow night."

He outlined rapidly and as faithfully as possible the conversation which he had heard that night in the manager's room.

"Oh, the pup! Didn't I tell you that him

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an' the inspector was both spiggidies? I'll go down an' claw the two o' them with my hands before they sleep."

"Can't do it, old man, it's too expensive in this country."

"Well, why in blazes didn't you tell me before now?" he complained.

"I didn't see that there was anything to be done. I was ready to tell you the minute it would do any good. What do you see to do now? Un—Mister Weldon will probably be here to-morrow—he'll likely come on the "Morro Castle"—but it'll be all over then and the dredge laid up for a month or two maybe."

"Done! We'll stay on that dredge to-morrow night—it's to-night now—an' kill any four spiggidies that comes near it. That was old Pedro de Cast'leon, he did a lot for the Cubans in the war—sold stinkin' beef to the Spaniards—an' now he's thicker 'n flees with the Cuban politicians. He'd git the contract if we lost it, an' graft it out, like he did the one in Santiago. But he won't git it, not if I have to dig up a thousand yards this month with them two paws, an' I won't have to do it. Did he say he'd send Torriente help?" He turned suddenly to the practical side of things.

"He offered it, but I could not catch whether Torriente told him to send it or not," Weldon answered.

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"'F I thought he was goin' to bring any crowd, I'd git three or four o' the sergeants down from the club—they'd give their belts to be in a racket—but I guess we'd better play it quiet. Anyway I'd rather play it out alone, for it's Mike Weldon's hand, an' that's the way he plays his hands."

"I guess that's the way I felt about it too."

"Sure. You're in command, if you say so: You're a Weldon, an' I ain't."

"What! What do you mean?"

"Say, son, the next time you go on a hike like this, hidin' yourself, you want to take the 'Rob Weldon' mark off your sock" (Weldon for the first time thought of the college laundry mark sewn on the socks he had worn coming away), "I ain't no squinty-eye," Pearsall was careful to explain, "I don't butt into no man's funeral; but when I see the name Weldon I'm interested right away. Good thing Torriente didn't see them. You'd 'a' had a hot chance o' gittin' a job here."

"How long have you known this?" Bob was interested in the thought that he ought to have noticed some change in Pearsall's attitude toward him since the knowledge had come to him.

"I knew you was a Weldon some way the day I told you about what Mike Weldon done for me; the way you straightened your back

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an' took my hand. I didn't have to see the name more 'n once to know that you was the 'Bob' he used to talk about sittin' out nights on a string piece in Nipe Bay harbor. He used to be down here more in them days an' I was pretty near the only white man on the job. 'My Nephew,' says he, 'a straight, stiff little cub. He won't have to carry a hod like I done, but he'll be a man for all that when I'm laid over, if he ever gits through with football an' dynamics an' cuss words o' that sort.' "

Weldon for another time reached out a hand:

"I guess I'm through now," he said. "How was that you said you'd work for Mike Weldon?"

"Like a dog, as long as there's hand or foot under me. That's the way."

"Yes. That's the way." Bob accepted the formula for its worth, and loved it for its ugliness.

Then they laid their lines of ways and means.

There was not the slightest change apparent in the round of the work day that followed. Weldon, meeting the manager as the latter came on board the dredge in the forenoon, announced to him by way of apology:

"I had your launch out a while last night."

"So I had surmised," was all the answer he

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received, as the other passed on in his way forward.

Torriente and the inspector were together much about the work, as was their daily habit, but there was no sign in the actions of either that there was anything unusual between them. The men certainly knew nothing of anything impending; unless it might be the cook, a painful, scraggly-looking yellow man who ruled the crowd and who was Torriente's confidential agent among them.

Weldon and Pearsall, one catching the eye of the other at each passing incident of the day, had to wig-wag that there was as yet nothing that could give a clew as to the manager's arrangements.

Contrary to his habit, Torriente stayed on board until the day's work was over. As he, with the inspector, Weldon and Pearsall, prepared to leave, the men gathered up about the little cabin. The cook, their spokesman, addressed the manager, there would be a cock-fight over at Bahia Seca that night, would it molest the Señor if the crew should go, they would, perhaps be out the whole night but they would of the utmost certainty be on hand for the work in time in the morning.

The manager seemed to hesitate as though he were not sure, though Weldon on the instant jumped to the belief that he had ar-

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ranged the whole scene with the cook, to get the men off the dredge for the night without suspicion. Then he appeared to decide and nodded, no it would not do any harm to let them off for once, provided they would give their word to be back on time in the morning. That must be assured; there was a big month's work to be done this month and there must be no laying off.

The crew in the prospect of a night of frolic and of gambling a month's wages in a few hours were loud in oaths of fidelity to the letter. The four went down over the side into the launch, Torriente taking the wheel and talking quietly to the inspector in the prow, while Weldon and Pearsall sat silent in the stern.

Ashore, the manager seemed inclined to loiter around the boat looking at the engine, giving the *hombre* some directions about cleaning it, and talking still to the inspector. Weldon and Pearsall went off immediately to get into fresh clothes for dinner. They were confident that nothing would be attempted until the men had all left the dredge, probably until late in the night, so there seemed to be no hurry. Dinner over, they wandered down along the bay-side among the old hulks of rotting boats, the queer, soft smells and the black fishermen, keeping a clear eye the while to the bay and the dredge.

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Old Pancho, an ancient friend of Pearsall, Carmencita, his woman, washed the clothes, and he wore the socks—when he wore any—, of the two Americanos, was cobbling at his old boat. He was in a mood to expand and sermonize:

"Look you, Señores, is that now any Christian way to split an oar?" He held up for inspection the full half of an oar showing a clean, straight split from end to end. "There now is the grain of the wood, crossing there. If that had been split by any hands but the hands of the *Brujas* it would have split so, thus across. I would keep it to be sure, I am not afraid, but the woman! She crosses her lips and will not let it be brought near the house. That is not enough, too, but here in the very place where it locked, look you, here held by a splinter of it, is this that some would call a handkerchief. I call you to witness, is it of size for any living body? I have offered it, the cobweb, to Carmencita in place of her red one of some metres, if she will take it from the oar. But she throws pots at me,—behold the cracks in my head—and says things concerning my father and others, and that I shall be damned as they undoubtedly were. As for me, I am not afraid, of course, but the thing is indeed very small for a human to have used,

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and the woman has tongue, so I have not removed it."

Bob spreading a corner of the water-soaked little wisp of lace found the initials for which he looked, and removing it gently from the splinter where it was wedged put it quietly into his pocket, saying, as he drew out a peso—

"I suppose it ought to be gold to quiet the witches, Pancho, but maybe this will help if they are not too noisy."

"I have heard my father say," Pancho gravely accepted the baser substitute, "and he was a wise man, if you forget a little dullness in the head, I have heard him say, 'A silver blinder will shut a mare's eye, if there be no gold one on the other eye,' and he was not an entire fool, if you forget that little dullness of the head."

"And do you suppose that we could have your boat for an hour or so, we want to take a little look around the bay, there might be some more witches' duds floatin' around." Pearsall was inclined to take a little fling at Weldon, while looking to the thing which had brought them here. "If Carmencita is right, she will have nothing to do with Weldon either after this. He goes sailing with the witches these nights."

"Most assuredly. I have heard that it could be done, if one had the right word for them.

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As for me I have never tried it, not so that I would be afraid, but you will know that the woman, she has a tongue. But the boat. Why not? You shall have it the whole night if you wish. It is yours, Señores. You will be going out to look at the place where the thing passed last night." He was pushing the boat into the water for them. "But if those were the *Brujas,* I shall most certainly stay in my bed nights—unless I be thrown out of it. Those be no comfortable people to go ride with."

Out on the water Pearsall refrained from any further allusion to the incident of the handkerchief. He knew his Cuban world too well not to know that the two whom Bob had assisted out of the boat had not gone out for a casual evening on the bay with him. Such things did not happen, unless one were engaged to the girl. And even then it would be very much out of the usual. Consequently he knew that it was better to leave the matter untouched. He rowed out quietly about the place where the explosion seemed to have occurred, meanwhile never taking his eyes off the single light which the men seemed to have left burning on the dredge.

Weldon, sitting on the back seat of the little boat, put his hands over his eyes to shut out from them, if he might, the sight of the blind-

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ing horror, of the man whom he had seen so vaguely in the dark, blown like thistle-down out of even physical existence. He had not attempted to understand, not even in those long hours of the night when he had sat remembering, what it all meant; or why She should be a part of it. True, he did guess, here and there, tentatively, at parts of the meaning.

They moved quietly up the bay in the general direction of the dredge. The darkness now would have been enough to hide them from the view of any casual observer on the shore, but Pearsall wanted to make it certain that their presence on the bay would not interfere in any way with the plans of the manager, whatever they were. He did not care to see those plans disturbed. Therefore he circled out well across the bay and dropped quietly back to the dredge from the farther side. Hiding their boat under the projecting prow of the dredge, which was nosed out toward the sea, they climbed cautiously aboard and started to examine things, for any sign of a plan already begun.

Keeping low and well back of the light so that they might not be seen from the shore, they scrutinized every cranny of the dredge, above and below, looking for anybody who might have been left behind in hiding to carry

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out the design. There was certainly no one on the dredge but themselves, nor was there a thing out of the usual order. It was plain that Torriente was intending to do whatever was to be done himself, or at least he was not going to use any of his own crew for the purpose. Had he perhaps given up the idea entirely? Weldon was almost willing to accept the latter explanation, or to say that he himself might not have understood well the conversation. But Pearsall would have none of it. Also he would be grievously disappointed if he did not have a chance to crack somebody's skull, preferably Torriente's, before morning. They had brought no arms with them, for the Spanish code, as Pearsall had once learned, sees little difference between the man who uses arms in the defense of his or his employer's property and the brigand who uses them in his trade. Therefore they knocked out a good pick-handle apiece—it reminded Bob of the young wagon-tongue dear to Canfry—and sat down in the shadow to wait.

The leaving of the light was a puzzling circumstance. If their hypothesis were correct, that Torriente had arranged to have the men absent from the dredge during the night to leave the way free for what was to be done, then certainly he could have as easily given word to leave no light, and danger of discovery

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would be lessened. It would not be an easy matter for any one to come out and work at the dredge with the light burning without being noticed from the shore. To remove the light would attract even more attention. Was it an oversight, or a signal, perhaps? As they watched and talked in low tones, Pearsall getting away from the matter in hand and rambling over the days and nights that he had seen on the Island with Michael Weldon, the hours passed, and the light, slowly burning lower and lower until it finally went out, showed its purpose. It had been placed there to allay suspicion on shore, by showing that everything had been left in proper order. Its gradual burning out would go unnoticed, being natural. Now they might look for whatever developments were to hand.

The silence, his fatigue of the night before when he had not slept at all, and Pearsall's droning monologue to the stars told on Weldon even over his sense of suspense and watchfulness. He was nodding into a doze, when suddenly Pearsall drove his long fingers into his arm making him sit up with a grunt. When his senses gathered back he could plainly make out the sound of oars coming from the direction of the punta. They had looked for the scurry of the launch but they quickly remembered that this would be more

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in part. Torriente would not come out in his own boat, of course.

As the sound came nearer, now plainly making for the dredge, they did not dare to show themselves above what would be the sky line of the dredge seen from the approaching boat but kept well to the darkness which cloaked itself about the foot of the leg of the crane. Now they could hear the dribble of the water from the lifted oars, and waited for the bump of the boat against the side of the dredge. There was no sound of any conversation. Apparently it was one man who quietly tied the boat to the little ladder and started up the side. They had agreed that if there was but one they would wait in the shadow to see what he would do. If there seemed to be more, then it would be better to rush them as they came over the side. Accordingly they stood quiet as the head and shoulders of one man came up into view and grew out of the dark into the whole figure of a stout man standing straight and looking sharply about him. Weldon was checkmated to see Pearsall after one look at the figure rush forward brandishing his pick-handle, and then suddenly drop it to grasp the man's hands, shouting—

"Holy Smoke! Where'd you come from?"

"New York, Tampa, Havana, an hour ago. Holding a ghost dance here, are you?" Mi-

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chael Weldon bit off his words as if he were clipping the ends of his short mustache.

"Oh, no. We're—just waitin' for a party."

"Who's with you? What's this thing anyhow?"

"Oh, it's—it's the engineer," Pearsall got out, with a fine sense of minding his own business. Michael Weldon took Bob's hand as the latter stepped forward saying nothing. It was too dark for one of the "time-table" looks. Pearsall intervened as he dropped the hand without recognition:

"We didn't expect you 'til to-morrow."

"How'd you know I was coming? What is this thing, I say: You're not a clam, generally."

"You most always come when you're due, an' before. I'm gittin' to it. Our engineer here heard Torriente an' old Pedro de Cast'-leon layin' a line to break you on the contract. You got a report o' nine hundred odd yards for las' month. Well, they figured that when you'd git that you'd arrive here about to-morrow mornin'—they figured wrong. Torriente was to fix the dredge to-night so that it wouldn't do anything more for the month. We was just waitin' here—he's the 'party'—to see how he was goin' to do it."

Then he went on to explain more fully the details of the affair laying no more stress than

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was necessary upon Bob's part of it, but drawing the whole out with a judicious clearness. Michael Weldon seemed to cover it, even to go ahead of it with a nod and a grunt at each point.

When it was finished he ruminated calmly:

"Yes. Old Pedro'd do that; do that and more. He owes it to me. But Torriente. I knew he was a snipe. What could I do? He was the only thing there was. What do you want to do with him, Billy?"

"I want to break him with my hands." Pearsall had no apparent passion in the matter; merely the following of an ancient dream.

"I suppose you do, and it's yours by right: You'd have had it anyhow if I hadn't come along. But, say, if he comes alone leave him to me, will you? I haven't had my hands on a man in a fair way for twenty years, and I've earned it hammering down overland to get here to-night." He seemed almost to plead for his right.

Pearsall agreed to humor him, in that, if Torriente came alone, they would not interfere. And the three sat down to wait.

Once or twice as Michael Weldon asked a quiet question of Bob about the work and the run of the levels, he seemed to lift an ear at the voice in the answer, as though trying to

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catch an echo that eluded him. But it passed each time.

As they waited the swish and patter of the launch came over the water and rapidly approached the side. They could hear it nosing aside the little boat in which Weldon had come out. Torriente evidently made nothing of the presence of the little boat, probably thinking it one which the men had not needed, for the next moment a roll of blankets was thrown up on the deck of the barge. Bob could think of nothing but that the manager was intending to spend the night on board. Michael Weldon and Pearsall knew otherwise, and agreed with themselves that the manager had looked well to the matter. In another moment the latter came up over the edge, peering about from habit of cautiousness. Satisfied with his scrutiny, he picked up carefully from the deck something that he had laid there as he came up. It looked like a little black stick and beside it he had laid a small coil of wire. With the stick in one hand and uncoiling the wire as he walked, he came toward the foot of the crane where the three stood, in the shadow of its far side. They could follow him quite well as he worked, unconscious of them, laying the little black stick in the centre of an arrangement that would serve very well as an induction coil. That done, he straightened the

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wires as they stretched across the deck and started to walk back toward the ladder. Bob understanding the nature of the contrivance clutched Pearsall's arm, to say that now was the time to get him before he should drop over the side. Pearsall and Michael Weldon had not forgotten the blankets. They stood quiet while Torriente picking up the roll carried it back to the crane and began wrapping the blankets around the small triangular opening between the heel of the swinging beam and the mast of the crane, where he had placed the stick and the wire. To complete the wrapping he had to pass around the crane, walking directly into the arms of the man waiting for him.

Michael Weldon caught him by the shoulders and drew him up slowly peering into his face as it came close to his own; so close that he breathed into it and could see the red, unfinished hairs on it shake in fright. Without a word, he whirled him about, giving him a swift knee in the side to straighten him, and then caught him, a fresh hold, one hand in the ruff of the hair, the other in the small of the back, swung him to his shoulder, as he had often swung a hod, took a little run, four or five quick steps, and heaved him headlong over the side of the dredge. In the paralysis that must have come upon him the manager forgot

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his resource for an emergency. In the air, however, he remembered, and shouted to the *hombre:*

"Touch the button!" They must have had that arranged to provide for something like this.

Bob, understanding, drove his hand into the opening, caught the bit of dynamite and with the one sweep of his arm threw it into the sea after Torriente. As Michael Weldon turned back, the current threw the flash between the two little points of wire. In it he saw what Bob had done: Also he saw his face clearly. Standing back on his heels he looked Bob up and down.

"Wait 'till your aunt sees you, my friend!" was his verdict.

Bob laughed a little shakily in the anti-climax. Pearsall hawhawed as though he had never looked at sudden death, and Michael Weldon joined him, when he had time to see the joke.

As they heard Torriente floundering about in the water and finally being dragged into the boat, Michael Weldon closed the incident:

"That's done now. Good job. Ought to make the dog swim ashore. It's coming morning. If that crowd of niggers of his comes back—which they probably won't—we'll want to set them—or somebody else—to work quick.

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We've got a lot of it ahead of us, boys. Think you can run it, Bobbie?"

"I guess so, sir."

"And, come to think of it, if I can quiet your aunt and some other people by cable, I haven't had a day off for a good many years; I might sit down around here for a couple of weeks and give you a hand maybe, if you needed it."

And they sat down, very content, smoking pipes, and told things—some of them true—until the morning.

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XV

PROBABLY because it was now practically his own, for use at least, and therefore could not furnish the zest of stealing out clandestinely, Bob did not use the launch much in the nights that followed. Also the long evenings when Michael Weldon climbed up to the room and sat cross-legged on the balcony, talking far into the night, his mood relaxed, his shrewd, small eyes twinkling out into the moonlight, showing kinks and sides of himself which Bob had never dreamed of and which he took to his heart; these things and the preoccupation of responsibility and of worried days kept away the temper that would have led him out to the sea. On Christmas Eve his uncle had gone to Havana, to return only on the late night train if at all. He was yet near enough both in years and in the spirit of hard-dying boyhood to the days when Christmas had spelt the glory of all things to wonder what Santa Claus would have for him. A pitiful, cynical-looking Tree imported to sadden the eyes of waifs from the North, which he had seen that day in a store window where the afternoon sun beat upon it to a temperature of

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ninety degrees or more—the asphalt and tar of the pavement outside the window was melting in the heat—had given him the idea, and he went out on the bay to see.

A cooling breeze carrying a promise of rain long in coming gave its hand to the little swell that was never still, and lifted the boat in a kindly rocking sway out through the harbor mouth. As is the manner of things, it was not Santa Claus nor the memory of jolly Christmas Eves that met him on the water. The untaught voices of the waves calling each to each in the language of the depths, far-off murmurings of things of which the minds of men know nothing but only the heart perceives, the whispering play of the wind carrying the hopes and dreams, the loves and heart-breaks of folk from land to land thrilling with them the bosom of the sea, making it to swell and beat in rythm with the pulse of the world's life, the very arch of the mighty silence spanning away from him to the souls scattered over the reaches of the ocean; they brought to him but the murmur of a single voice; they shaped to him but the memory of one form. At the portals of his heart's inner dwelling they shook from themselves the dust of all outer things and entered in only the image of her who was the presence of the house of dreams where he had his being.

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The stars of the night, shining now through a little haze, now burning deep and clear in the distant beauty of their pearl white, were her eyes, filled and clouded now with the mist of her soul's burden, shining now deep and dear and true as they had looked upon him. The rising and falling of the waves gave haste to her feet as she came hurrying over the body of the waters, gliding from crest to crest straight to him. The brooding wings of the night drew about them a fabric of solitude in which they two walked alone of all the world to sing the truth of fond dreams, fronting together the face of sorrow and trial; his arm about her, step for step they passed again through the places where their lives had touched, and on, and on to others more keenly dear where there were no partings.

"It seems that you will come once more, and then—" she had spoken as out of a vision that passed. He was almost sure that she herself had not known what her words meant, but had merely worded the prompting of the vision, as of a thing ordained beyond questioning of how or why. As she had given the revelation so he had taken it. She would call to him once more, suddenly, without time for thought. And he would answer. She had seemed to see, too, that he would not fail. He had come to understand in a dim way that the things

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which troubled her were in some way her father's, but he had not allowed thought or question to go deeply into the reason why she should be so vitally in the midst of them.

Now the Devil of Things as they Appear came to him, sowing question marks. These schemes, or dealings, or whatever they might be, of her father could not be entirely above-board. They must at least be something for which he could be lawfully punished—she had said as much. This last had undoubtedly been smuggling. Many otherwise virtuous people believed the trade to be entirely respectable, he knew: But after all it was not just the occupation that one would choose for the girl who would some day be his wife. And she unquestionably had been engaged in it. Smuggling high explosives, too, as though the ordinary pursuit of the business were not exciting enough. The shocking, terror-striking horror on the bay that night, the lone death on the water, sobered him now as they had not done even at the moment. In the white glare his dreams fled and the darkness came back alone. Yet he had been awake when he had dreamed long, rose-lighted dreams of her. He had been awake half an hour ago when she alone had been all-sufficient answer for every question that his being asked. But also he had been awake when he had seen these other

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things. He had really looked at that death-flare—and he had seen her take letters from a man's room. People do not usually feel themselves privileged to do that unless—unless? But even the Devil of Things as they Appear did not quite dare to carry the question to the length that she might have written those letters. He was too wise a devil for that. He left the question mark standing to do its own work, and went on about other things. There seemed no way in which the facts which he had seen would fit with any possible theory that could be formed. Facts which undoubtedly were facts standing by themselves came to be rank lies the moment they were placed beside the truths which the spirit had told. And they *were* facts, his eyes had seen them. Then the rain came to drive him scurrying in across the bay and up to his room.

The shower passed, tantalizing in its meagreness, leaving only a white glisten in the heavy air to tell of its passage. Sitting on the balcony the sudden din of the Carmelite bell beaten in the nervous, hurried way that is so offensive with Cuban church-bells destroyed the peace of the quiet air. The Church on the Hill, too, he did not know its name, sent down its message, slower, more gentle in the distance—a sound that called, really, and pleaded a little to forgetful ones to come to the birth-

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mass of the Christ-child. The thought of a mid-night mass he had gone to once with his father came wandering through his mind, while he shut his eyes to give it play. The snowy sidewalks where he had scuffed along kicking out long shadows in front and leaving sharp-pointed, thin prints behind, the quiet, murmured happiness of many people together, the long dim aisle seeming to lead right up to the altar and on up, a path of glorious light up over the banked candelabra straight into Heaven, the crowds kneeling, bowed, hushed —if he stood up he could look over all their heads, but he did not dare stand up nor move, nor let himself think of things that you mostly thought of: It was all as real as it had been that night. He had not thought to go to mid-night mass to-night,—he had heard that the crowds were not entirely devotional in this country at such times, and he could not get over his irritation with this people who seemed to take their inheritance of religion so non-chalantly—but the sound of that distant bell gave a call to which he answered without thinking why.

Before the mass was over he was sorry that he had answered the call of the bell. The habit of reverence which boyhood training and school association had given him was disturbed by the gaudy tawdriness of effect. The spell

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which the hour and the brooding Mystery should bring was driven away in his disgust with the bearing of the crowd. He would have to go to mass again in the morning, for he could not feel that he was fulfilling any obligation here. Beggars clamored and fought each other lustily at the door. An old woman knelt here and there, even one or two men —negroes they were—braving the wonder of the rest were on their knees. The seats extending half way down the church were filled with women, showily overdressed, picturesque enough maybe, somewhere else, but blantantly irritating here. Young, most of them, fluttering fans in their delight at being from home unattended, as the law allows on this one night of the year. The men, callow, wise youths for the greater part, many making their annual visit to church, seemed by common consent to form a sort of general parade up the center, across in front and down the side aisles, straw hats and canes in hand, marching high and gingerly to a general air of foppishness. Once Weldon arose to leave the church, but the bell for the *Sanctus* brought him to his knees again: The parade went steadily on.

It was over somehow. The crowd passed gayly out with *Felices Pascuas!* ringing noisily through the doors. In the half darkness of the shadow of a pillar, in little niches formed

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by the jutting of side altars, scattered about a few were praying quietly. The gentle slipping of a rosary or the sigh of some old woman's *Dios te salva, Maria!* seemed to allow the beauty and the truth of the holy hour to come back to its own. A number were grouped in the right transept in front of the altar where the scene of the Holy Night was displayed in the grouped figures of the Stable of Bethlehem. Weldon stood for a moment and then passed quietly over to the darkened transept opposite, where the deserted altar with its single little point of delicate light under the picture of the Virgin seemed to invite a mood of quiet devotion. The picture above did not seem to be any of the conventional copies of the Masters. Probably it was not a great painting, but some old Spaniard had wrought tenderly and finely in it, touching with a tenderness of reverent love the Youth of the Virgin. Only the face of the picture showed out of the shading, seeming to gather to itself the light from across the church. She was looking over toward the scene of the Birth, but it did not appear that she looked at it. Her eyes seemed to reach above and beyond it. Drawn to follow the gaze of the eyes, Weldon looking across saw that they were fixed upon the great crucifix placed high in the gloom of the arch of the transept. Whether

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this had been an arrangement of an artist or was the effect of the angle of the light it brought to him the reading of the prophetic soul-touching sorrow in the eyes of the child Mary when she could have known no sorrow; looking beyond this night of her joy and the days of her glory to the high summit of the world's grief. It brought crowding back to him as it had not come to him since the days of childhood, when he had seen Death and heard grief talked about, the mystery of life, of tears glistening in the eyes of joy, of pain, of endurance to the end, of the price of life to be paid. The mystery of the deep-reading question of the Virgin's eyes.

As he knelt, trying to understand, yet knowing that he might not, there was some one kneeling beside him at the little rail. He had heard no step. There had been no motion of which he could have been sensible, yet truly as he had the consciousness of himself he felt the presence of another there who questioned with the same question, who prayed with the same prayer as did he—to look rightly, to be taught, to be given grace and truth of heart with which to pay the price of life.

He did not dare to move, hardly even to question himself as to whether it was real. It *was* real, entirely, eternally real, in the very reality of things of the spirit.

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Quietly, silently as it had come, the presence was gone—he had not listened for the sound of retreating footsteps. He was alone with his prayer. When it was finished, he went softly out of the church, breathing a Merry Christmas! for the mere joy of the home words as he gave his peseta to the last beggar lingering at the door.

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XVI

MICHAEL WELDON had been detained in Havana over Christmas. It was not easy to get business done while the town was in a ferment of hearsay revolution. Conspiracies and rumors of conspiracies were in the air. The night before Motilla, Suarez and Sanchez had been taken by the secret police as they were stepping into automobiles to start for the interior where there were said to be hundreds, even thousands, of men ready, drilled and eager for an attack on the peace and property of the island. Talk of American corporation money used freely to foment and encourage trouble, of negro uprisings, of horrid race war impending ran loud and hysteric through the cafés. Crowds of excitement-loving people ran through the streets with their *Vivas!* and *Bajas!* for everything that could be thought of. The government, steadied by the immediate presence of six thousand American troops on the island, was convinced that it was necessary to make a marked example of the three leaders who had been caught, for the sake of the discouraging effect that it might

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have upon others of the same persuasion. An immediate trial and peremptory justice for them was assured. Michael Weldon subscribed heartily to all this, from reasons both of sentiment and trade. He would have been willing, had it been asked of him, to pay his share of the expenses of the trial, if thereby he could have been assured that a round number of the revolutionists would be placed in security. He found however that his participation in the matter was confined to stamping up and down stairs and hammering on closed office doors, while the men whom he must see, at other times staid and family-loving business men, Cubans and Spaniards alike, went hurrying darkly and mysteriously about the city, signing petitions, heading pronunciamentos, going through all the patter that must precede and accompany every process of law in the South. For while the Latin-American dearly loves justice in the abstract, and will weep for it, yet its administration in the concrete, falling as it inevitably does on some deviously joined relative of his, never fails to draw from him fiery appeals to the laws of personal privilege. Blind Justice must always peep from under the handkerchief, to see that she is not jailing somebody's father's third cousin.

Meanwhile Michael Weldon was losing time,

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he was in the way, too, of losing money. He did finally capture old Serafin Mederos, on his way from a closeting with a special judge, and dragged him up to his office for business. Mederos had made tentative proposals to Weldon in the matter of some private dredging that was to be done inside the reef at Nuevitas, but had apparently put them all out of his mind when the other matter had come up. Now Weldon brought him back to figures. The work, however, which had seemed simple in the first proposal, now, in full description, came to show elements of difficulty which involved it beyond the grasp of a rule of thumb contractor, which was the description Weldon always gave of himself. By it he meant that he could hire technical men more cheaply than he himself could spend the time working over the problems which were presented. Here were questions, complicated by a variable tide, gradations in quantity and quality of rock, under-water shelves partly honey-combed, which yet might be extremely stiff to work: Bob must be called up at once. The work at Matanzas could go on with Pearsall for a few days.

Bob from the window of his room in the Leal could look down and across into Monserrate up which he had marched with fifty others on the morning of his arrival in Cuba.

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Too, he had gone down that same street on the morning following to start on his ride with Manuel. He hoped that Manuel was again on his feet and able to provide for the "eleven." He had not the sense of personal anger with the present disturbance which had affected his uncle. He could afford to be amused with the antics of a people whom he made no pretense of understanding. The three prisoners, as he could understand it, were a mild form of bandits, who were better in jail.

In a day or so more the papers began to be filled with demands upon the leaders for confessions and a naming of those who had furnished the necessary capital for the projected revolution. Such things could not be raised without money. Then came detailed reports of wholesale confessions from them implicating the Board of Trade and several other highly impeccable institutions, spurious interviews, also, naming the Governor and most of the American officials as having conspired against themselves. As lies, these were interesting in their way, being prolific and satisfying in detail, but here and there it seemed that an in-apt note of truth crept out. An allusion by one of them in an evening paper to certain men who had promised definite help to their enterprise and had failed in the last moment, and who if they did not come forward now with

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money for the defense of those on trial would certainly be revealed to the court, seemed to bear some likeness to reality. As he read, curiously, the thought came to Bob connecting the incidents through which he had passed with this. It was not a very definite, nor did it appear a very sensible thought, but it stayed. It was confirmed the very next night by an allusion of the same man to the explosion in Matanzas harbor. The interview, bearing many marks of truth, explained that matter which had so far remained a mystery by saying that a quantity of high explosives which had been bought for the use of the revolution in the blowing up of bridges had been directed to a man who should pick it up on the water and deliver it to the parties forming for the work. It had been thought that this man who had received the stuff from the boat which had brought it over from Florida had gone to his death in the explosion. He, the prisoner, if he were at liberty, could point out that man safely walking the streets of Havana, where he was now living in his winter home. This was possible through the influence exerted by the friends of this man, Americans and Cubans. But if those friends did not now come forward and furnish the means of his, the prisoner's, release, he would cry out his name in the court.

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It was plainly an appeal to prejudice, yet Weldon could not but believe that it was in the main true. No mention of the name Mercaderes, however, appeared among the many guesses as to who this man referred to might be. The trial was now three days off and Bob set himself out to make the work on the specifications for the Mederos contract cover that period.

On the afternoon of the day before the trial as he came down to the street for a little walk before dinner, the newsboys were calling *Ultima Hora!* the Extra! among Spanish street-cries, and shouting themselves hoarse with the name of Eligio de Mercaderes. The picture on the front page of the paper that came first to his hand was beyond doubt the likeness of the father of Mary Dunleaven Mercaderes.

A warrant had already been given for his commitment and the officers, it appeared, were even now on their way to arrest him. According to that he must by this be on his way to the *carcel.*

Weldon's walk led him along Neptuno and down the straight, shaded length of the Prado. He did not reflect—did not know perhaps—what building stood at the foot of the avenue. This thing which had come had not been altogether unexpected, but it was none the easier for that. One thing only seemed to form it-

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self clear out of the many. It was not that now in what seemed to be her extremest need the girl called to him as she had not done before. Now she did not need to call in any way. Suddenly she had become so intimately, so entirely his own that there was nothing of calling or of answering, for that which was hers to face was for him also, in that which she must suffer he must bear the man's part. It went back to that midnight when he had knelt at the altar of the Virgin and the Mantilla which had woven itself in and out of their lives had fallen across his shoulder as she had prayed beside him. It came back to him now as final, as definitely clarifying all things. She had come to him,—whether in the body or the spirit mattered not at all,—in the hour when she had foreseen the full measure of her trial. And as the Mantilla had woven the symbol of its web between them, the common prayer had traced their lives into the one pattern of sorrow and joy, of exultation and of sobering, grim life on to the end.

Corita, when Weldon had placed her in the carriage and she and her father were rattling through the pokey streets of Matanzas and up the long slant of the river road, past the church on the hill, toward home, had no thought of

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the old man sitting supine beside her. She had her arm about him in a vague way of protection but she was merely living over the moment when out of darkness and distance and despair a man had come and drawn her to the security of his arms. She had called to him, she had begged and pleaded that he might come, while in good sense she knew that he could not be near. Yet in that moment he had come! The one instant when he could have intervened with good. It was not madness, after all. The other things, the race into the harbor, even the terror of the explosion—Toribio dead on the water—they might be parts of some horrible nightmare, but he—he at least was real. Every swing and lilt of the carriage brought her swaying over the edge of the two boats into his arms. He had come because—he was he. She knew, of course, that he was in Havana, eighty miles away—the strikebreakers were still there, according to the papers, and he was with them. She was ready to grant all this. It did not interfere in the least. She had been in his arms a few minutes ago. And, later, in her two hands, she had given him her life and heart and being, to be his, in trust, until once more she should call and he should answer. He had accepted, gravely, knowing the price, tenderly, because he put his own clean boy's heart in the

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pact; and then he had gone away into the dark as he had come.

Only once through the long miles of the river road did the old man speak. Plainly his thought was of Toribio: "If we had but taken that worthless Juanito in stead," he regretted aloud. "But then, he would not have had the intelligence to get himself killed so."

The grim unconscious quip brought the tears to Corita's eyes, as she thought of the queer faithful old man, whom she had sometimes loved and always feared, flicked out into the pit of death. She could not keep from herself the fact that there was relief, too, in the tears, for with them came the consciousness that only as it had happened could security have come to her father. If, once they were at home, she could keep him from brooding dangerously over the death of his servant, he might yet be well. He had spoken normally, with a bitterness, but quietly as though he controlled himself thoroughly.

At the steps of the portál as she helped him out he seemed to tremble a little—he had been too terribly shaken to have recovered at once—but he made change with the *cochero* quite capably and sent him away with a commonplace *"Buenas Noches."*

The door was closed as they had left it early in the evening. As they came near to it Co-

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rita wondered unthinkingly if Toribio would be prompt in answering. Then she remembered, shivering in the full chill of unnatural fright. She was sure he would be there. As soon as they should knock the door would open and Toribio would stand there, his eyes unseeing, his clothes clinging and soggy with water, his black hair laid flat and glassy. Her father, whether he reflected her trembling or had premonition on his own part, seemed to sense the same thing, for twice he reached for the knocker and as often drew back his hand without striking. When finally he seemed to grip himself and lifted the hammer bringing it down with a single decisive bang, the noise went wandering out through the long, unused halls, breaking and gathering itself back to them in a series of hollow echoes. Almost with the coming of the echoes there came the slither, slither of Toribio's *zapatillas* from his little cubby under the stairway, along the hall straight toward the door.

The two stood dumb, powerless to do any other thing. Corita was conscious only of her tongue moving uncertainly about in her mouth, her father stiffened rigid, tense, as to meet a blow. The shuffle came quickly to the door, and the drawing of the bolts sounded through the house. The door swung open—Toribio stood there holding it back for them!

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Corita could only stand, held by the horror of his dull eyes—in life they had been always strange and fearsome—by the long wet wisps of his hair, by the weeds clinging damply to his clothes. Her father seemed to take one full look at the figure before him, then without any attempt to speak he stepped stiffly through the door and without looking again started toward his own room.

Corita because she had been holding his arm and had no power to let go was drawn in through the door with him. Inside, though, she could not break the bond of those eyes and as she stood her arm pulled away from her father's and dropped unnoticed to her side.

She stood half-turned, staring over her shoulder at the apparition for an uncounted time, until the figure spoke:

"Your mare corked herself a little standing so long," she heard it say, "but I brought the three safe home."

"You—You—You—" her tongue seemed to be still unanchored—"You are in purgatory, no!"

"Que va, purgatorio! Is there water in purgatory? I am frozen with riding three leagues in wet clothes. This minute I finished to arrive and get the horses to the corral. What—?"

"There was no explosion, then? We—"

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"Ay, 'we': There was an explosion, then. For, look you, I set your fan and some loose paper to burn in the bottom of the boat and slipped over the side into the water."

Corita sat down weakly on the *portero's* stool.

"Look you," he went on, "I had the breath beaten out of me like the fishes did—a shark turned on his back, rubbed his big white belly up in my face—the cutter went within three feet of me. The thing turning at the heel of it woke me up entirely and I swam quietly to shore, came up the bank in a dark place and got to the horses. With much respect, your mare is a fool and would neigh but that I threw my *sacita* over her head. But that is not what I was beginning to say. What is—?"

But Corita, loving him for the good sound of every snarling word, had by this time gotten strength to start for her father's room.

Once again the cord had broken. Her father was sitting on the floor gibbering uncannily to himself. As she made a light from the candle on his dresser she saw little flecks of blood on his white beard. He was carefully picking out pinches of hair from his beard and arranging them methodically in little piles on the floor.

Through all the night after she had gotten him into bed she sat and knelt by the bed croon-

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ing to him, sometimes soothing, sometimes holding him forcibly when he attempted feebly to rise, while his disordered mind went fitfully on its round. He went over the whole of his oath, right on to the end without missing a word. Then he would pronounce it for her to repeat. But he would break in the last words just where he had broken on that night in the crypt, and he would have to go over it all again. Sometimes he struggled to throw himself from the bed as he had tried to leap from the boat, crying out that his "faithful" must not die alone. Under the quiet pressure of her arms he would sink back spent, feebly repeating Weldon's words—in English. His brain seemed to have photographed the very trick of the words for he mimicked faithfully —"Your 'faithful' will probably hang—but your daughter will not—your daughter will not—your daughter will not: Neither will you, for that matter. Now he is come to haunt me"—he seemed to go on upon an idea from his own thought—"he will make his purgatory at my door. There now is his step in the hall. So he will walk there for an eternity. Holy water will not drive him from there, for it was my fault that he went without the priest."

Once only did Corita try to argue, to make him hear that he had not seen an apparition. In a lull when he was murmuring quietly to

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himself she began to repeat evenly into his ear: "But Toribio was not killed—Toribio was not killed." He garbled on unnoticing. Unconsciously her voice rose until in her eagerness it seemed to her that all was lost if she did not in that moment break through, by very force, the cloud of his mind. The pulse of her excitement must have caught him, for, as she went on growing louder and louder in her insistent—He was not killed—He was not killed!—the old man seemed to take the refrain, beating the while on the bedclothes, repeating and growing louder and louder against the growing shrillness of her voice—"But your daughter will not—Your daughter will not—Your—"

She stopped, caught back to reason by the gruesome futility of the thing, and great, quivering sobs of defeat, of despair and helplessness, shook her as she quieted him and his voice trailed down to the continuous, senseless murmur. She did not care to think or to try to argue anything out in her mind. There would be time enough for that in the long days that were coming. How long would it be? Would it be *always?* There was only the ever-present, heart-sickening thought of regret—that she could have prevented all this—that she had actually brought it about. Why had she not left him in ignorance of Miguel

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Suarez' visit and his message? She had even been eager that this exploit of to-night should be gone through with! Her hopes of good from it, her full belief, at that time, that only thus could he feel himself free of his bond, her own sacrifice, these now counted for nothing in the weight of her self-blame. Once she looked into the range of the future at herself set apart consecrated to the soothing and quieting of her father, for there did not seem now to be any hope that he would be different from this. In her helplessness it seemed that she must accept it as final, but there was no pity for the sad, brave-eyed woman she saw in the picture. It was the price to be paid, the measure to be filled. But her heart wept silently over the things now dead which had glorified it two hours ago.

Toward the morning he seemed to sleep, starting feebly now and then. Gradually her fatigue overcame her until she settled down by the bed, her head falling on her arms across the pillow, and she slept fitfully and brokenly as did he.

The day brought Manuelita to find her Niñita half kneeling, sleeping by the bed-side dressed as she had gone out the evening before—she had not removed even the mantilla. But, for the first time in the lives of the two of them, Manuelita was driven from the room

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quiet and afraid. In spite of the care, though, he awoke. Rather, his eyes opened—there was no awakening. He had no recognition for the girl at his side. When he insisted upon rising, she did not dare try to prevent him, in the fear of exciting him again. Somehow she helped him to his clothes, handling him as a child. Manuelita, coming cowering to the door again, was despatched to banish Toribio definitely from the house, and from sight.

In the hall her father paced obediently with her, taking step for step with her, but in no human way did he show that he knew of her presence. He started, turned, or stopped in obedience to the physical demand of her touch. At breakfast he ate from his hands the fruit which she placed in them.

Their house in Havana had been open for some time in expectation of their coming to the city for the winter, and after breakfast she took the resolution of going that day if he seemed able to take the journey. Maybe it would do something, at least it would remove him from sight of things connected with the tragedy of these last days, and, too, it would be a way of keeping Toribio effectually away from his view.

In the afternoon she dressed him for the trip, and carefully leading him out by a side door, that he might not have to pass through

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the main door at which he had seen the old servant, she brought him to the waiting carriage and they were driven again to Matanzas. She had perhaps some fear that the road itself or the town from its connection with last night might have the effect of disturbing him, but he seemed to notice nothing. He sat dully in the waiting-room of the station while she went for the tickets, apparently neither seeing nor hearing anything of what passed around him. As she came back, a neighbor, Rafael de Montecalvo, approached, speaking to her father as he came. But Don Eligio, when the other came across the line of his vision, saw nothing, merely stared vacantly toward the spot on the farther wall where his gaze had rested while he had sat there. Corita interposed quickly, taking her father by the arm and leading him toward the platform. As she passed, the pain in her look apologized mutely to the other man, and he, seeming to comprehend kindly that there was something not to be understood, accepted the apology with a grave bow. Her father followed up into the train when it came, obedient still to the touch of her hand.

In the same way he accepted the big house fronting into the street Teniente Rey, sitting himself down at the pressure of her hand in the big chair that had held his father and his

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grandfather before him, and rising from it when he was bidden in the same way.

The days that dragged themselves along one after another brought little of change and nothing of hope. He noticed nothing, responded mechanically to her physical promptings, was quiet, murmuring only occasionally the things which had made up the burden of his delirium on the night of his seizure. The live, poignant pain of self-accusation which Corita had at first felt passed into a dull, numbing, pitying ache of helpless resignation. One day brought only another to follow it and so it would—to the end. She had not forgotten Weldon. While she lived, as she had said to him, she would remember. But this with its utter finality placed them so entirely apart that she did not see him in any future that the mind could run to. Neither had she forgotten the words that she had spoken to him out of the vision of her heart on that night at the punta in Matanzas, that once again she would call to him and he would answer; but everything of that night had been so unreal, so out of the proper march of things that she could build nothing upon it. Only he had been real, and he had been most unreal of all the things that had come on that night.

The papers, she had read one on the way from Matanzas on the train, had told her of

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the excitement over the affair in the harbor, and of the wild guesses that were on everyone's tongue. As the days followed they told her of the other matters that were occurring, of the arrest of Suarez and Motilla and the other. Later they told of the efforts made to get these men to name their accomplices, and of the threats made by Suarez to reveal the person of the man who had been his principal inciter. Would it do good to go to Suarez with money, she would not hesitate at that if it could accomplish anything. It could not help, for Guiterez, the secret-service man, certainly knew of her father's connection with the plotters and they would arrest him when they were ready. The house must already be watched, for it must be known that she and her father were in the city. No one had seen him, but they knew, of course, where he was to be had, and were not at all anxious. She thought of attempting to steal him to an outgoing ship, but the same reasons made it utterly out of the question. There was nothing to be done but that which she was doing, waiting.

When they came for him, in pity, she could almost thank the cloud that had fallen over his mind. He gave them no look of understanding. Apparently he did not know that there

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was any one in the room, as the officer droned off the warrant of the special judge.

Before the creepy vacancy of his stare they hesitated to put hand on him to bring him away. She, knowing that it was the only way, begged that she might go with him. And they found it easier to follow when she had touched him on the arm and placed his hat upon his head and his stick in his hand. During the ride to the *carcel* they sat superfluous on the little front seat of the *coche,* wondering if this man were a deaf-mute.

On the Prado side before the main entrance of the *carcel* the *coche* stopped, and, as she helped her father to alight, Weldon, taking his walk down the Prado, for a little air, his head hanging rather low for him, stopped at the obstruction of the walk. As he raised his eyes quickly, he looked directly into the eyes of the girl whose name he had that moment been pronouncing in his thought. The one look that passed, in the depth of its fullness of understanding, seemed to be enough, and Corita turned to lead her father into the building.

The old man seemed to stumble a little, and Weldon, taking his other arm as by unquestioned right, the three passed within the building and up the stairs.

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XVII

THE room for a hundred years set apart for the trial of political offenders lacked the breaking of light and shade, the white and black of hope and hopelessness which are the proper drapings of other courtrooms. For in others through which the tide of human erring and sinning flows there is always something of hope. In them men are wont to be tried that it may be seen whether or not they be guilty of offense. In this one, through its lifetime, men had been tried because they must be proven guilty. The broken air of the thousands of brave men who had passed through it out to stand with a bandage across their eyes before the bit of wall, across the green of the little park, or of those who had walked out to the less merciful garote, had grown in that time to be the air of the room itself. Nearly a decade of use under a different régime had not been enough to lift from it the impress of settled gloom. The heavy bars of the deep-set window slits, twisted crudely one across the other, gave the impression of extending themselves entirely around the room and of ad-

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vancing steadily inward to an ever-lessening circle of hopelessness. The sighs and groans of dying hopes, the dry ashes of burnt-out inspirations, the dust of high courage withered into death by this room, lay heavy on the spirit of the place. The very light itself seemed to come into the room, not for the purpose of brightening but merely that it might throw into yet darker shadow this or that place in which the gloom might brood.

Here boys had sat on that first long bench with the very morning face of school upon them and looked into the eye of the judge, and had marched out across the little green to the wall. There on that long bench men, lovers of country and kin, had left the glow-dreams of the morning, to die. Wise men, who had mistaken the time. Foolish men, who had taken no thought of time or means. Mad men, who had hurled themselves against the breast of an unthinking tyrant, and had found it to be a wall, the little wall across the green. Their very figures seemed to linger about in the gloom, drooped shoulders, bowed heads, fleeting silhouettes of hunted, haunted men shaped themselves upon the shadow, retraced, reformed, dissolved, came out of nothing to group themselves along that bench, or to resolve themselves into the figure of the old man really seated there.

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Even as they when they had come to this last pass must have looked upon the scene, or straight out before them, seeing nothing, knowing that there was now nothing to be seen, nothing to be looked for, so he was looking unblinking at a blank unmarked space on the front of the great pulpit in which the judge sat. Hither he had come from a cell where for three days men had talked to him, asking questions which he had not heard, working his eyes with probes which he had not noticed, testing him with pin-pricks at which he had vaguely scratched. If he played madness, he played it well, carrying the game right into the court with him, where he had been led solely by the drawing of a hand.

At the far end of the long bench sat the three men whose trial had been delayed by the coming of this new element into it. They did not, perhaps, have proper place here to-day, for the question was entirely of his sanity, present or at certain times in the past. Still there might well be some development out of this in which the case would be strengthened by their presence. The calm, unrelieved surety in the scene, so uncommon in any scene of the South was doubled in its effect by the meagreness of the number of actors and spectators. A half dozen lawyers in funereal black, as many clerks awed into silence, some seven or

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eight spectators, one a heart-broken girl, these, even with a pompous judge, could not do much against the grim shadows and traditions in which the room itself spoke.

Weldon, sitting back in the darkest of the shadow, was conscious only of the girl, brave and strong in the strength of unshed tears, the tremor of an unbreathed sob shaking her slender body and showing only in the waving and trembling of the mantilla which clouded itself about her face. She was seated far forward on a bench just back of that on which sat the prisoners, her body strained forward and drawn tense as though there were something to be accomplished by some mighty physical effort. He himself had come to the trial because she had pleaded with the judge that a card of admission might be sent him. He was, she had said, the only friend whom her father, were he able to choose, would care to have near. The judge had, perhaps, some difficulty in understanding how Don Eligio de Mercaderes would have chosen, before all the men of his age and race, this young American, but he had ordered the permit sent. Likewise Bob had of a sudden found many errors in the work which he had been doing in the Mederos contract and which was keeping him in Havana. Michael Weldon had agreed that it was better that Bob should stay on the ground and

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complete the work while he himself went down to Matanzas to help Pearsall.

The trial of the three conspirators had been interrupted for the examination of the more important prisoner, but when, on his first appearance before the judge he had exhibited all the signs of mental unbalance, the court had been held over and a commission appointed by the judge to inquire into his condition. As the court waited, the four medical men, professors of the university of Havana, filed into the room to deliver their answer to the question of the judge. Behind them came Guiterez, the secret-service man of the Palace. Weldon had wondered that he had not appeared before in connection with the trial, but he was even more puzzled now to know what place he could have in this matter.

The leaden, uncanny silence of the room was broken for a moment as the four men marched the length of the room and found places in the chairs ranged on the little platform leading up to the judge's bench. The fifth man slipped quietly to a seat on the side near the prosecuting advocate, and the silence closed over again as the judge gave his attention to the record which had been handed up to him. He studied it at some length, and then turned to read it to the four.

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When he had finished, he put the usual question to them:

"This, then, is your sworn judgment, according to the honor of your profession, and as servants of this court, that this man here in presence, Don Eligio de Mercaderes, is of unsound and irresponsible condition of mind, and that he has been so for an indefinite period of time—the length of which time cannot be definitely determined: Do you all and severally agree in this response to the question placed before this court?"

As though he would prolong the importance of the moment, he was not content with the collective answer of the commission delivered by the spokesman, but must put the question to each individually. When each had attested to his agreement in the finding of the body, the judge turned to face the old man sitting directly in front and beneath him. Through fifty years the judge had been a close friend of Don Eligio. Forty years ago they had both ridden in a Spanish cavalry regiment, putting down rebellion in this Island. No other supposition than that Don Eligio was indeed mad could explain his foregathering in the company of those who sat upon the bench with him. Yet—yet, it was not easy to let it into one's mind that this old companion in arms, this gentleman of schools that existed

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no more, should have come to anything so entirely out of the way of Spanish gentlemen as to have gone weakly crazy. Through the first hearing as through this one, the judge had looked for some sign that the old man was feigning. Surely it would be far unworthy of the school in which they had both been taught, yet, these old men, the judge ruminated —he himself was some five years older than the prisoner—were like to do anything in their weakness. Through all, on both occasions, the prisoner had sat, his sightless, unspeaking gaze fixed upon that blank space of the pulpit-front. He had not moved a muscle, not so much as a line of his face out of the position into which he had fallen when they had led him in and pushed him down into the seat. Plainly he was not aware of the existence of any other being. He had not even that air of listening to unseen things which sometimes seems to relieve the utter blankness of insanity. For many days now he had not made an articulate sound of any nature.

The judge reading the finding of the court, which he had prepared in advance, in anticipation of the judgment of the commission, coming to the mention of Don Eligio's name laid a peculiar stress upon it, seeming to think that by force of his intonation he would come through that wall of blankness by which the

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prisoner was surrounded. But he was very evidently unsuccessful in this, for the name passed without the slightest sign of intelligence upon the face of the prisoner, and the judge went on with his pronouncement—to find that the said Don Eligio de Mercaderes was a person incapable, not to be accounted with his acts, therefore not to be tried for any offense against the state in which his name might have figured, but to be turned over from the arm of justice to the Departmiento de Sanidad for detention until—

"But what right have you, what law of yours have you proven him to have broken that you have a right to say where he shall be detained?" Two policemen, keepers of the court ran forward as though to lay hands upon her, the judge stood up, to defend bodily the offended majesty of the court, the lawyers gripped their chairs at the unheard-of breach of the integrity of things—in the hundred years a woman had not spoken in that room above a sobbing whisper. Weldon took a step forward from his chair, to be nearer. But the girl swept on. "Is it not enough, does it not satisfy you that he is reft of every sense which life had given him? Have you not seen that so he has to be taken in arms even as he had to be taken once in the arms of his mother? If this is not enough to tell you that he is help-

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less, harmless, then, I have carried him, led him, fed him, a poor dumb thing through these weeks and weeks. Why will you say, then, that he shall be housed and prisoned with thieves and murderers who feign madness? You would speak of such time as he should be cured: Is that, then, the way in which he will be cured, to be thrown amid howling mad things, to grovel out the end of his clean, brave life in the filth of your mad-house? Oh, give him to me! I will care for him. I will sit with him, I will watch with him! As long as the God leaves him to breathe, I will not be from him a moment of his life. Or, if you will, it is I who am to blame that he is in this pitiful state, I it is who deserve to be punished, for he has come to this through me. Take me also, if you must. I, too, must go where he shall go. If it is his crime that he knows not a word of that which goes on here about him while you decide the fate of his life, then that is my crime, and I must be punished with him. That —Oh, in your pity, you will not deny me that —that I may at least go with him where he goes and care for him until the last!"

The wild ecstasy of the girl's pleading caught every man in its grip so that he held tight to whatever his hand came upon, and forgot to breathe until she had finished. Out of the sensible silence that followed her voice,

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there came from the prisoner a sort of tottering rhyme as though he followed the time of some unheard chant. The desperate prayer of her voice must have reached through the cloud that lay about his senses, or perhaps it was just the rise and fall of her plea in its half-chanted sweep that touched his mind at the very point where it had left off, that fell upon the very chord of memory that had last succumbed to the numbness. As she leaned to catch the mumble she heard those very words that had burned themselves into her every conscious moment, the last that he had clearly spoken—"But your daughter will not—Your daughter will not—Your daughter will not!"

Across the utter silence they came clearly back to Weldon—his own ill-fitting words that night in the boat.

The rhyme wandered on, growing less and less distinct, as though, lacking the impulse that had roused it, it must die away into the silence. With its going, the spirit of the room and the broken majesty of the court came back to their own. The judge ineffectually tried to clear his throat that he might give out his disposal of the case. He could not, of course, answer to the plea that had been made in such manner: He could not even admit that the sanctity of the court had been set aside as it had been: He must make it plain that there

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had been no interruption. Accordingly, he went back to the word at which he had stopped:

"Until such time—as the court shall order, the body of the said Don Eligio de Mercaderes is, by the discretion which this court has of the code, remanded to the responsibility of the person or persons next of blood to him. If such person or persons be within the hearing of this court, let them take this as notice of this disposal. If they be not in such hearing, the servant of the court is charged that they be brought hither in the body to—"

"If the court pardon—" The court plainly did not pardon. It glared down, frowning at this subversive breach of court manners on the part of the public prosecutor. But, by its silence, it allowed him to go on:

"With the pardon of the court, it must be brought to the attention of the court that the person who is next of blood and to whom the body of this incapable person is committed is not a proper person, in that she herself was of party with this conspiracy. Urging the precise necessity of the matter, I dare to plead that the preliminary examination be omitted and the daughter of the prisoner be placed on trial with the other delinquents. I claim the arrest of the Señorita Mercaderes on the charge of taking and destroying evidence belonging to this court when it was in the hands

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of a servant of the court and on its way to its destination in this court."

The judge doubly disturbed by this second passage, which he could not by any representation ignore, weakly accepted and took refuge in reading the paper which the prosecutor had that moment received from Guiterez and had handed up to him. Caught in a wheel of events which seemed to turn too rapidly for him, he went on to proclaim:

"Maria Corita Mercaderes y Dunleaven is thus cited to appear before this court to answer to the matter of having destroyed evidence, the property of the court. The servant of the court will seek out and bring the body into this presence."

The servant of the court had been the servant of the court here in these rooms for most of the years of his life. He had seen mad outbreaks of condemned men here. He had seen prisoners break their chains, in the old days; he had heard them curse the judge. Once he had seen a prisoner kill the prosecutor with the iron paper-cutter which had lain on the prosecutor's little desk; but the servant of the court had never, until this day, seen majesty itself, in the person of the court, flouted to its very face, made to contradict and reverse itself on the moment. It was too much. He rushed forward with the hand-irons ready, seeming

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to think that that only so could the heavens be set back in their place.

Weldon followed closely as though he would prevent the barbarity. But his intervention was not needed. The girl, seeming to understand, but seeing nothing, reached out her hands for the irons.

At the sound of her name her father had lifted his head. Some unused door in the chamber of memory must have creaked open at the repetition of that name which he had not heard pronounced in its full length since the day when he had read it to himself, printed on the death-slab of the wife of his youth. Corita had moved a little farther to the front so that she stood almost beside him. Now he noticed, and wondered, maybe, who she was and what she did here. A man came rushing forward and presented to her—irons—he remembered them—the symbol of things which had haunted him. It needed but this sight. With one spring he was upon the man. The girl's hand had caught in the folds of her mantilla and had not yet entered the ring. In the strength of madness he grasped the man's hand, wrenching viciously until the bones of the arm cracked and the man fell fainting, while the iron jingled on the floor. Corita with a wild prayer in her eyes looked into her father's face, and seeing was content to sink

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down with him upon the bench of the prisoners.

But the majesty of the court had yet more to suffer, for the young American was addressing it in very bad Spanish:

"The young woman accused did not take the papers, evidence, or destroy it—that is, I, myself, took the letters from the room of Guiterez on the steamer and threw them into the sea."

The judge, unable to make any but a mute protest, was obliged to accept the formal confession which the defendant advocate presented from Weldon's words. But when the prosecutor, on the other hand, proceeded to farther objections, the court gripped back its majesty with a strong hand and pronounced:

"The arrest of the woman is ordered stricken from the record. She is free to go and care for her father. The confessed, Roberto Gordon Weldon, is in the custody of the servant of the court, his body to be passed to the governor of the *carcel.* The court adjourns itself."

The four prisoners, Weldon third in the line, filed out the door at the left and passed guarded down the long dark corridor to the cells.

Corita leading her father out to the carriage found that he did not need to be pushed down into the seat.

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XVIII

ON the way home Corita was not giving her attention to her father. She had given him almost every waking thought during these last weeks, but now, at the very moment when she believed that he was coming back to his mind, her eyes saw only the set of another man's shoulders as he passed out through an iron door and down a corridor. As the *coche* turned the corner of Calle Zulueta her father spoke clearly and evenly, taking up the thread just at the place where the tangle had begun:

"Did I see a ghost?"

She gripped hard upon his hand which she held, but managed to answer:

"No, Father mine, it was Toribio, real. He was not killed as we had thought. He escaped by jumping from the boat at the last moment. But we will not think of it, eh, Father?"

"When was this?" He seemed to take the range of things.

"It was some—days ago."

"You are right: It is better that we do not think of it."

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At the door, Toribio met them. He had been allowed to come up to the town house during the days when the master had been in the prison. He would have run back hastily into the house, but when he saw the clear light in the master's eyes, and when the latter gave him his hand naturally; with a habit of other generations and other conditions the old servant dropped to the ground and fell to patting the shoes of his lord.

"Raise yourself. Do you forget that you are a citizen and lord of this country of ours?" To Corita the little fling at democracy seemed to clear away everything and to bring her father back on the instant to the normal. Toribio pattered away leading his master to his room, while she went up to her own place —to pray—and to think.

On her knees before the little lamp which she had lighted on the altar of the Virgin in her room, she knew that she was not praying, she was not asking anything, there was nothing now to be asked for. She was pouring out her heart full and brimming with a very human, all-compelling love for him. He was in prison—for her! In the tide that swept over her, she realized that the one dear thing that her heart craved was to share a prison with him. A prison, or death, or disgrace, if it should be, only that it be with him. Would the

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Virgin—would her own earthly mother understand? He had taken it upon himself. Had he perhaps that night on the boat seen something of this, when he had said, "You will remember that I alone have done this"—and she had answered, "While I live, I will not forget." Now to-day she had seen him led away with felons, and she had not lifted her voice. Like a coward, she had stood trembling weakly. It must not be so, should not be so. There was yet time to go with a confession to the judge. The court was over for the day, but she would find him at the Centro Asturiano. The mantilla was still thrown over her head.

The *cochero* dozing in the shade of their side of the street as she came down, roused himself enough to say:

"A donde?"

It was in her mind to say, the Asturian club, but some instinct more subtle than thought put the words back. Instead she said:

"Al Palacio." When she had time to think of it, she saw that the instinct had probably been right. It was not always that a court could be carried off the feet of its slow-moving dignity as she had seen it done to-day. If there was help to be had in this crisis; if a knot was to be cut it must be by the one person in the nation who was above the court.

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Once, on a trip around the world with her father, three years ago, she had danced at a ball in Manila with the man, a clean-stepping captain of infantry in the American army, who was now the aide of the Governor. He would get her an interview with the great man.

The captain of infantry did try to produce the every-day objection that the Governor was very busy and—But he already knew what had passed in the special court that afternoon, and the pleading in her eyes sent him hurrying to the Governor.

Coming back, he led her across the bare waste of the Red Room to the little inner office, and there, drawing aside, he held the door open for her and gently closed it when she had passed in.

In the ready gentleness, in the steadying kindness and understanding of his level gray eyes, the great man, a giant, even physically, among the men of the race with whom he dealt, seemed to put around her at once assurance, hope, strength. From the beginning, without tears, but with eagerness, word hurrying over word, she told him the tale, down to the moment when she had stood, twenty minutes ago, on the curb and instinct rather than reason had told her to come here instead of going to the judge with her confession and demanding to be imprisoned with the other.

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"And you would have done that, my girl?" the governor questioned.

"I would have done that. And I am ready to do it now if there is need." And the Governor, looking deep into the story that her eyes told, saw laid bare the whole of her heart's life before him, and he turned away, to ruminate:

"But why did he do it? There was really no need. We would not allow you to be held on such a charge. We have known everything of your father's connection with these matters. There was really nothing definite against him. There was not even any real proof in those letters which—were taken. It could not have been proven that you took them. Now he has complicated matters by this—confession of his. Why in the world did he do it?"

"Why—Why—"

And the Governor looking again as she faltered, turned again, to ruminate aloud:

"He's a great fool, that youngster—but a wise fool, after all: Which is more than can be said for the most of us fools. Would you" —turning to her again—"be content to leave this with me over-night, and could you come in the morning, say about nine, for an answer?"

The steady, big fatherliness back of the ordinary words, giving her the strength which

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none had been near to give her in all these weeks, brought the welled-up tears. But before they came the Governor felt the folds of a mantilla thrown about his neck, and felt himself kissed very gently. Before he recovered, she was gone.

In the *coche,* the tears had their way.

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XIX

IN the long, narrow cell festooned with the cobwebs of years on end, the long slant of the afternoon sun was weaving a great mantilla out of the tracings of the webs, pricking them out in gray and gold, now puckering them into drawn folds, then sweeping them out in flowing length along the reach of the walls. Weldon, pacing the cell, his hands in his trousers pockets—they had not yet taken his clothes from him—was whimsically counting up the loss and gain. The flutter of the cobwebs in the little breath of fetid air that entered through the high loop-hole of a window brought him to the mantilla. Of all the things that it had brought to him this one was the sole reality. That night on the boat, that might easily have been a chapter out of a novel. The night in Matanzas harbor, that, except that he had held her for a moment in his arms, could very properly have been a part of a rather successful nightmare. But this, this was engagingly real. The fellow in the next cell singing nasty Spanish songs, he was real. The neighbor on

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the other side was not quite so commonplace —the guard had mentioned that he was on trial for cutting out the heart of a live white baby girl for the *Brujas* who would use the blood for cures. He was real too, when you were within four feet of him, though he seemed a quiet enough sort of person.

It was not exactly that he was surprised at being here. Things usually came that way when they did come. Not that he had counted, that night on the boat, on actually coming to this. But when one starts in being the plaything of blind fate he can hardly expect to go unbroken for ever. Was it worth the while, or did he want the game to be called? That was foolish, for he was beginning to understand that there is only one referee's whistle in this game that they call life, it sounds only when the play is over. Was it worth the while? That was not the question. There was no question. She had called and he had answered. Loss or gain or the other little points of the play, he realized, were not to be counted, only the one thing, that he had not failed her in the hour.

The mantilla turned all black as the dark came beetling down. They brought him some nauseating stuff to eat, but he did not let it interrupt. Next came Michael Weldon, hurrying up from Matanzas. He had been in-

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formed by telegraph of what had happened in the afternoon.

He had stopped on his way across the city to speak man to man with Major Preble, Supervisor of the Prisons, therefore he was admitted to talk to Bob at this unheard-of hour.

"Eh, Laddie: What's the mess now?"

"Oh, it's—it's—Have you heard the story, Uncle?"

"Some of it. Do you do these things on bets or is it a fixed policy with you? You'll look like old Don what's-his-name, your patron apparently, if you stay in here long."

"I guess I had better tell you the whole thing."

"Is there more of the same kind?"

"Of course, it bores you—" Bob stiffened a little.

"Fire away, Laddie. Don't mind me. I'd better know the whole thing anyway, the Governor's a screw at questions."

Again the whole matter was detailed. As it came down to the end Michael Weldon plainly forgot his attitude and listened for more. When it was done he put his hand in through the bars of the door to grasp Bob's:

"Your father again, Laddie. He couldn't have done it better, and he was something of a chevalier—God rest him!

"But you have a way of coming out on your

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feet that he never had. Why she's the greatest girl in Cuba: I've known of her these five years. She's kept that old man from sudden death, and poverty and high crime—the old fool—ever since her mother died. I thought I was offering you something when I was getting ready to turn over these Cuban contracts to you for a few years to let you fight away with them and see what you could do for yourself: They're too far away almost for me to handle rightly now. But you! Why Eligio Mercaderes' affairs will keep you busy for the rest of your natural life."

"I'm sorry about the work. I wanted to make good."

"Oh, that's all right. It's easier for me to get an engineer than it is for the old man to get the kind of a son-in-law he needs."

"But there isn't anything like—"

"Sure not. There never is; of course not. But I must get to the Governor before he goes to bed. Keep a stiff lip, Laddie. What's the use of having an American governor down here if he can't get us out of jail once in a while. And—if it's any help—I'll tell you what your father would have said in the premises. He'd have said, 'Whatever the brave little girl is thinking, you can be sure that she's thinking it harder than you are,' if that's any help." Then he pushed his hand through be-

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tween the bars again and said his good-night.

In the morning, about nine, two guards came with the keeper of the prison, and, without saying anything more than that he was to follow, opened the door of his cell and led him down the long corridor. He wondered when they marched him past the door which, he remembered, gave the way into the court-room, and he wondered still more when they escorted him down the stone steps and out into the good, free air again. He thought it more worth while to let the thing ravel itself out as it went: Any turn now was likely to be a good one—for the reason that it could hardly be for the worse.

The carriage into which they escorted him turned quickly down by the little spot of green, by the bit of wall toward which men and boys had marched in the days gone by from out of that prison, along the sea wall and through the mesh of streets that lies between the Prado and the foot of O'Rielly street. In a general way he gathered that they were going in the direction of the Palace, but he was not quite prepared, when they reached that building, to be marched in state up the marble stairs and through the great white halls. When they came into a large, bare room finished in red, the keeper of the prison motioned him to a seat

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while the two guards stood themselves like pokers at either side of him. The keeper touched a little bell, apparently to give notice of their presence, and at the side a door opened to admit into the room a big, light-stepping man, a black-haired, powerful-looking man, with strength and lasting balance written into the set of his great figure and in every line of his broad, well-cut face.

When he had dismissed the keeper and the guards, he turned a swift, appraising look upon Weldon. The latter had that moment been wondering idly whether the Governor had ever played football. The look brought him to his feet.

"Well, young man, for your time of life, it strikes me that you have contrived to get yourself into considerable trouble." He did not wait for confirmation of his view, but went on: "Do you take it that aiding and abetting revolution, accomplicing before and after the fact —and destroying the evidence; do you take it that that is the purpose for which we are raising young men in our country up there?"

"No, sir," Bob responded automatically. He knew that the Governor probably did not expect any answer, that there was no answer. But he had not felt so like a schoolboy for ten years as he did in the grasp of that look of the big man.

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"To come to the matter, then: The judge has found an error in your commitment of yesterday, so that you are no longer under arrest nor, I think, are you in danger of second arrest, provided you observe the peace of nations. The—incident that led to your—confession yesterday was ill-advised; the fault of an over-zealous prosecutor. It could only serve to hurt the case of the government against those who were really guilty. It has been put out of sight consequently.

"How old did you say you were?" he wheeled suddenly.

Bob had not said anything about it, but he answered as if it were matriculation day:

"I shall be twenty-two my next birthday."

"It's good to be there, my boy," the Governor said, putting his hand on Weldon's shoulder, "it's good to be there and to do the things that we can let ourselves do then. But—" the voice gripped now—"these things do not happen twice."

"No," Bob admitted. "They don't need to," he added a little vacantly.

"I guess you're right in your case," the Governor granted, smiling a little, "you are not likely to be in the same setting again."

"My uncle, then, told—"

"Your uncle. Hmn: Yes, he was here last night laboring with me—he is the man

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who held me up in a corner somewhere about two weeks ago and rated me for paying attention to these delegations of Cubans who were coming begging for the liberty of their cousins and cousins' cousins and so on. Yes, but I have other sources of information. For instance; you have in your pocket at this moment a little knife that you took from Guiterez' state-room that night."

As Bob felt hurriedly for the knife, the big man went on:

"But you'll excuse me now. There is a big morning's work here. Good luck, my boy. This way out, please. You know there are always two ways out of a—situation."

The room to which the Governor pointed was the one by which he himself had entered the room. It was the door of his own office. Bob hesitated as he stood in the door, seeing that there was no exit from it. Then he entered quickly and closed the door behind him, for, over by the open window, he saw the folds of a mantilla swaying a little in the breeze of the morning, and the figure standing there turned with her hands outstretched to him, as she had done once before.

As he gathered her gently to him, she murmured as out of the space of a dream:

"Again I have called—and you have answered—and now—!"

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"And now—" he said—"There is nothing after *now*. Now is to the end of the story, dear."

THE END

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